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THE BLACK SELF-DETERMINATION EXPERIENCE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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DEDICATION

In memory of you, I lovingly dedicate this to me.

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ABSTRACT

For over four decades, America's educational system has overrepresented Black students in its special education programs. To little avail, and no avail if discussing a decrease in the disproportionate rates America identifies and refers the Black student for special education services, many authors have addressed the overrepresentation phenomenon. In fact, many authors have produced educator and system oriented initiatives, which omit the Black student from being a solution to his or her very own special education overrepresentation, might actually disempower Black students, and might actually perpetuate overrepresentation. The Black Self-Determination Experience sought to capitalize on research that demonstrated that empowered Black students with a sense of control over their education and destiny produce the in-school and postschool transition outcomes that dissuade special education placement. The Black Self-Determination Experience included eight distinct research questions to achieve four specific goals that together realize the vision of empowering Black students to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their education and destiny. To do so, the Experience concentrated on the enhanced self-awareness that produces the authentic self-determination that then might enable America's Black students to address their special education overrepresentation. The Experience included five Black students both with and without IEPs, four parents and one legal guardian, and employed mixed methodology. Results indicated the Experience to be an effective self-determination curriculum, for each student exited (a) having learned essential Experience content knowledge, (b) professing feeling more self-determined, (c) better understanding their academic identity, and (d) believing that others should have The Black Self-Determination Experience.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

> The more we retreat from the culture and the people, the less we learn about them. The less we know about them, the more uncomfortable we feel among them. The more uncomfortable we feel among them, the more inclined we are to withdraw. The more we withdraw from the people, the more we seem to dislike them. The less we know about their culture, the more we seem to dislike it. And the worst of it is that, in the end, we begin to believe the very lies we've invented to console ourselves (Storti, 1989, 32-34).

One fall 2003 afternoon, a 29-year old young Black man sat before The University of Oklahoma's Special Education Graduate Admissions Committee fully understanding his shortcomings regarding admission requirements. Yet, he sat with no doubts that he would soon be their first Black doctoral student. He sat so confidently because he understood his need to address the disproportionate rates at which he had experienced Black students being "guided" into special education. As he sat, one of the professors asked why he believed he should be admitted into the program. He replied as if no one, not even himself, existed in the room. It was as if he stepped aside and gave way to that inner voice that spoke intimate truths. He shared an experience of a reality therapist who worked at an inner city alternative school.

The reality therapist specialized in relationship building, for he needed to build relationships in order to address the "reality" of a situation. This reality enabled students to identify goals and determine if their present behaviors facilitated or hindered the realization of their goals. He considered himself a vessel facilitating for

the students to experience his or her authentic self. At the school, he routinely met individually with students and monitored classrooms in which teachers complained of "problem" students. One day, while monitoring an English classroom, he noticed a problem student enter the room late. He watched silently as the English teacher sequentially requested that each student read aloud. With elevated interest, he listened to silence as the student sitting next to the tardy Black male finished reading. He continued inquisitively listening as the teacher betrayed the silence by demanding that the Black male read. As if the climax was not climatic enough, he heard the Black male say, "no!" The student then stood up and knocked over his chair. The teacher looked to the therapist, expressed her gratitude that he was there to witness the student's "maladaptive" behavior, and asked that he remove the student from her classroom, visit with him, and discuss the behavior. The therapist agreed and proceeded out the classroom's door with the student close in tow. While exiting, the therapist allowed curiosity to be his guide, for he wondered if he had not become a pawn in a distorted game.

Immediately after exiting the classroom, the Black male and the therapist began processing the event. They first discussed the scowl the student wore while in the classroom, which appeared when he realized he had to read aloud. They next discussed the scowl's almost immediate disappearance when the student stood outside the classroom's closed solid wooden door. They then discussed the ever so brief smile the therapist observed on the student's face once they stood outside the door. The therapist then asked, "you can't read, can you." The student replied, "no, and I don't want them to know." The therapist's curiosity morphed to satisfaction when he believed he

understood the student's behaviors. His satisfaction morphed into dissatisfaction when he understood how the student's behaviors extinguished opportunities for him become a better reader. The therapist, displeased with being both satisfied and dissatisfied, asked the student why he told the teacher no and knocked the chair over. The student said, "I would rather be kicked out of class than have them [my classmate] laugh at me."

Later that same day, the therapist visited the English teacher. She informed him that she had researched special education and believed the student should be referred and placed in special education as mentally retarded (MR) or emotionally disturbed (EBD). She said the student demonstrated significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior and persistent and consistent behaviors that interrupted the entire class's education. She continued and said that the student's behaviors met the criteria necessary for MR or an EBD special education placement. She then informed the therapist that he had just witnessed one of the student's maladaptive behaviors and that the student's grades reflected the IQ she was sure validated her judgments.

Being a skeptic of the IQ test, the therapist asked how she believed the student's attending school about once a week, impacted his education. She seemed prepared for this line of questioning and said that his behavior constantly interrupted his classmates' learning and her ability to teach. She concluded with her belief that his behavior and attendance, or lack thereof, he used to mask his disability. From that point, the therapist only listened as the teacher detailed her argument.

That was the story the twenty-nine year old Black male vividly and emotionally shared with the professors. For me, sharing that story remains as simple as

remembering to the point of reliving, for I was that therapist. I was that therapist who met with the English teacher and, at her request, visited the school's principal. I was that therapist who visited the principal about conducting after school parents' meetings to increase parental involvement. I was that therapist who held a first parent's meeting with many in attendance. I was that therapist who held a sparsely attended second meeting. I was that therapist who held a third and final meeting that no others attended. I was that therapist who began arriving at school early to read with the Black male and any other student needing my attention. I was that therapist who had a professor as an employer, whom I approached at every opportunity to share my frustrations and concerns. I was that therapist who listened as my employer discussed the Black students' historic American special education overrepresentation. I was that therapist whose employer handed books, a business card belonging to a professor at The University of Oklahoma, and told, "with your talents and passion, you should not be complaining but doing something" (Wesley Long, personal communication, spring 2003). I was that therapist who accepted, used the books as a key to open the door to my doctoral studies, and began learning about the Black students' American special education experience.

Statement of the Problem

Over the past 40 years, and essentially since special education's birth, concerns have existed about its overrepresentation of Black students (Dunn, 1968; Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002). According to the United States Department of Education's 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, and 28th Annual Reports *to Congress on the Implementation of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005,

2006), American special education programs overrepresent Black students. Most recently, the 28th Annual Report (2006) concluded Black students, second only to American Indian/Alaska Native youth, to have the greatest risk of receiving special education services as infants and toddlers, three-to-five year olds, and as six-to-21 year olds. It also concluded the Black student to hold the greatest risk for receiving the MR and EBD label, which historically have presented the most Black student overrepresentation. But, what is so problematic about Black students' overrepresentation in a "special" education system designed to provide the individualized academic and social curriculum central to in-school and postschool success?

When examining the Division for Career Development and Transition's (DCDT) quality of life indicators (Halpren, 1994), it appears that the Black student exits his or her special education to experience extremes that do not promote a "quality" life. For example, Black students remain least likely to graduate with a "standard" diploma and hold the lowest graduation and second highest dropout rates (Kunjufu, 2005; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009; USDOE, 2006; Wagner et al., 2005). The Black students' special education experience includes exiting to be most likely to be unemployed, if employed, provide "unskilled" labor and work the most hours while receiving the lowest hourly wages, and parent out of wedlock. In addition, the Black student remains most likely to engage in physical fights, carry a weapon, be a gang member, be stopped by the police, arrested, placed on probation, and incarcerated (Kunjufu, 2005; Newman, et al., 2009; USDOE, 2006; Wagner et al.,

2005). In sum, the Black student remains special educations' student most likely to transition to poverty.

My major concern with the Black students' special education experience resides in their postschool transition outcomes, which equate in too many instances to poverty. I find this extremely problematic because the USDOE (2005) found students living in poverty to be 1.5 times more likely to receive special education services. When considering that Black students remain special education's students most likely to live in poverty, exit to experience poverty, and that poverty seems to be a major special education placement perpetuator. Thus, I find the Black special education students' postschool transition outcomes to be a major concern. I hold this consideration because transitioning to a life of poverty, which increases one's likelihood of receiving special education services, for an already overrepresented group of students might represent a self-perpetuating cycle. Transitioning to a life of poverty might just sentence future Black students' to the "Black special education experience."

What is the Black special education experience? The Black special education experience includes postschool transition outcomes such as, being most likely exit without a diploma, live with one's parent(s), be illiterate, receive little to no postsecondary education, and, if employed, providing unskilled labor and receive the lowest wages of all students exiting special education programs. Black students escaping these outcomes face the reality that they are special education's students most likely to be incarcerated. I am most concerned with the transition outcomes associated with the Black special education student because these transition outcomes, I believe sentence future Black students to the Black special education experience.

Specific Concern

Specifically, I am concerned with the Black students' disempowerment. In the four decades of literature addressing disproportional representation, many have voiced concerns and solutions. Many have proposed systems and educator directed initiatives, which essentially exclude the Black student from being a solution to their own disproportional representation. Freire (1970) found that, to exclude an "oppressed" people from being solutions to their oppression, reduces them to objects to be manipulated and disempowered.

Purpose

I designed The Black Self-Determination Experience to empower. Specifically, I designed and conducted the Experience to achieve four distinct goals that together I hoped realized an overall vision. First, I sought to better understand the Experience's influences upon student learning of central Black Experience knowledge content knowledge. Second, I sought to better understand the Experience's abilities to enhance the self-determination of Black students with and without an IEP. Third, I sought to better understand the Experience's influences upon a Black student's academic identity. Fourth, I sought to contribute to the Special Education field, and America's entire educational process, through addressing the Black students' disempowerment and empowerment. I need to address disempowerment and empowerment, for they seem to undergird most discussions about the Black students' educational concerns but also seem to remain most silent. Overall, I sought to realize the vision of better understanding the Experience's abilities to enhance a Black student's self-awareness

and, in the process, empower a Black student to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their education and destiny.

Justification

Nineteen sixty-eight's *Coleman Report* studied Black students to determine attributes that contributed to their successes and failures. The report concluded that Black students with a sense of control over their education and destiny produced the best in-school and postschool transition outcomes. Nineteen eighty-four's *Black Self-Determination* (Franklin, 1984) found that enslaved Africans in North America used the term "self-determination" and defined it as control over one's destiny. Those enslaved human beings believed education brought self-determination and self-determination brought freedom. My justification resides in my understanding of the Black students' special education overrepresentation story as a continuation of enslaved Africans' struggle for freedom and my belief that self-determination might provide this freedom.

General Areas of Inquiry

The Black Self-Determination Experience included two general areas of inquiry. First, I examined the Experience's impacts on participating students' (a) learning of central Experience content knowledge, (b) self-determination, and (c) academic identities. Second, I sought to better understand students' perceptions about their Black Self-Determination Experience.

Research Questions

The Black Self-Determination Experience included eight research questions. I designed and employed research questions to address specific issues and provide an

empirical understanding of Black Self-Determination Experience impacts. I used research questions one through four to quantitatively examine Black Self-Determination Experience impacts upon (a) content knowledge scores, (b) self-determination levels, and (c) academic identity. Research questions five through eight I used to qualitatively examine student perceptions about the value of their Black Self-Determination Experience. I list all eight research questions below.

1. What influences might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on student content knowledge scores?
2. What influences might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on AIR student self-determination scores?
3. What influences might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on AIR parent self-determination scores?
4. What influences might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on student academic identities?
5. How do students believe their Black Self-Determination Experience influenced their content knowledge scores?
6. How do students believe their Black Self-Determination Experience influenced their self-determination scores?
7. How do students believe their Black Self-Determination Experience influenced their academic identities?
8. Why or why not do students believe other Black students should have the Black Self-Determination Experience?

CHAPTER TWO: A Review of the Literature

Black students have been disproportionally overrepresented in United States special education programs for more than 40 years (Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002). The Black students' special education overrepresentation contributed to the "Bush administration . . . [arguing] against approving any [special education funding] increase until the over-identification of special education children, specifically minorities, was fully studied" (Losen & Orfield, 2002, p. X). With the countless volumes of literature addressing the Black students' disproportional overrepresentation, I believe we have studied the phenomenon thoroughly enough to understand its detrimental impacts upon the Black students' special education, and specifically, their postschool transition outcomes. Though the Black students' special education experience receives great attention, many use their voice to assign responsibility for the circumstance to the United States and its society, educational system, and history. While assigning responsibility, many of these voices may actually perpetuate disproportional overrepresentation through removing the Black students' responsibility for his or her circumstance. Removing the Black students' responsibility for his or her circumstance fosters learned helplessness and contributes to disempowerment (Diener & Dweck, 1978; Freire, 1970).

Through researching opportunity, we might study viable methods for addressing the inflated rates American special education programs serve Black students. Thus, I constructed this chapter to articulate the Black students' cyclical special education overrepresentation and examine opportunities to end the cycle. To do so, I first provide an overview of the overrepresentation phenomenon. In doing so, I first addressed the

mathematics used to define the Black students' historic special education overrepresentation. Next, I addressed a Black special education student's postschool transition outcomes to demonstrate these transition outcome's contributions to a repetitive special education placement cycle. Third, I addressed the five conditions researchers believe perpetuate the Black students' special education overrepresentation. Fourth, I addressed proposed overrepresentation solutions, while demonstrating that these systems and educator oriented initiatives might actually perpetuate overrepresentation through the disempowerment that resides in removing a Black student's responsibility for his or her condition. Essentially, I presented the Black students' special education overrepresentation story as a tale of disempowerment.

Next, I present my perspective of the Black students' special education overrepresentation, which I framed around empowerment. I first addressed the disempowering Self-Fulfilling Prophecy of Black Intellectually Inferiority I believe undergirds the overrepresentation phenomenon. Next, I addressed the self-determination I believe might empower Black students to address special education overrepresentation. I deconstructed self-determination into self-determination and Black self-determination, for I found responsible to thoroughly articulate the empowerment essential for Black students and their communities to address the overrepresentation phenomenon. Essentially, I presented the Black students' special education overrepresentation story as a tale of empowerment.

Defining Overrepresentation

At the United States federal level, the United States Department of Education's (USDOE) Office of Special Education Programs and Office of Civil Rights exist as the

primary calculators of special education representation. Both the OSEP and the OCR use composition indices, risk indices, and risk ratios to report special education representation. Before discussing the composition index (CI), risk index (RI), and risk ratio (RR), I must acknowledge that calculating disproportional representation can be a straightforward affair as long as one remembers that, "the denominator is the key" (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998, p. 16). Using different denominators can eliminate, exacerbate, or accurately reflect disproportional representation. For example, one uses a different denominator to determine the proportion of Black students receiving special education services as opposed to the denominator used to determine the proportion of students receiving special education services who are Black.

Composition index. The CI uses the total number of students in a specific racial/ethnic group and in a specific disability category as the numerator and the total number of students in that specific disability category as the denominator (Donovan & Cross; Klingner et al., 2005). The CI reports the proportion of students receiving special education services in a specific disability category who are of a specific racial/ethnic group. According to the 28th Annual Report, Black students composed approximately 21% of all students receiving special education services, 20% of all students classified with a learning disability (LD), 33% of all students classified with mental retardation (MR), and 28% of all students classified with an emotional/behavioral disturbance (EBD). To add context, Black students composed approximately 14% of all United States students across this time span (USDOE, 2006).

Table 1 reflects special education's composition across time and racial/ethnic groups according to the 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, and 28th Annual Reports to

Congress. It presents data pertaining to six-to-21 year old students across a seven-year time span. As evidenced in the table, since the Annual Reports began collecting data on racial/ethnic representation, Black students composed approximately 20% of all special education students. During this same seven year span, Black students comprised approximately 14% of all American students.

Table 1

Special Education Composition Across Time and Racial/Ethnic Category

Category/Report	AI/AN	A/PI	Black	Hispanic	White
22nd	2%	2%	20%	15%	62%
23rd	1%	2%	20%	14%	63%
24th	2%	2%	20%	15%	62%
25th	1%	2%	20%	15%	61%
26th	1%	2%	21%	15%	61%
27th	2%	2%	20%	17%	59%
28th	1%	2%	21%	16%	60%

Note. From the U. S. Department of Education (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004b, 2005, 2006). Due to rounding, sums of percentages may not equal 100 percent.

Table 2 uses this same mathematical calculation to reflect special education's composition specific to the MR, EBD, and LD disability categories for students' ages six-to-21. Evidenced in Table 2, special education consistently overrepresented Black

students in its MR and EBD disability categories. According to the 22nd Annual Report (2000), Black students comprised 34% of all students classified with MR. The 28th Annual Report (2006) showed a continuation of this trend as it reported that the Black student composed 33% of all students classified as MR. The 28th Annual Report further concluded that, in most instances, the Black students' MR representation was more than 2.5 times their overall student population. In terms of the EBD category, the 22nd Annual Report found Black students to compose 26% of all special education students, which the 28th Annual Report similarly reflected. The LD disability category reflected the least overrepresentation rates of the three, but still showed the Black student to be classified with a LD at greater rates then would be expected considering their overall school representation.

Table 2

MR, EBD, and LD Special Education Composition

Category/Report	AI/AN	A/PI	Black	Hispanic	White
MR					
22nd	1%	2%	34%	9%	54%
23rd	1%	2%	34%	9%	54%
25th	1%	2%	34%	12%	51%
26th	1%	2%	35%	11%	51%
27th	1%	2%	35%	12%	50%
28th	1%	2%	33%	12%	51%
EBD					

22nd	1%	1%	26%	10%	62%
23rd	1%	1%	27%	9%	62%
25th	1%	1%	28%	10%	60%
26th	1%	1%	29%	10%	59%
27th	1%	1%	29%	10%	59%
28th	2%	1%	28%	10%	58%
LD					
22nd	1%	1%	18%	16%	63%
23rd	1%	2%	18%	17%	62%
25th	1%	2%	19%	18%	60%
26th	2%	2%	19%	18%	59%
27th	2	2%	20%	19%	58%
28th	2%	2%	20%	20%	57%

Note. From the U. S. Department of Education (2000, 2001, 2003, 2004b, 2005, 2006). Twenty-fourth Annual Report data not included because it used a different calculation. Due to rounding, sums of percentages may not equal 100 percent.

Risk index. The RI uses the total number of students in a specific racial/ethnic group and in a specific disability category as the numerator and the total number of students of that same racial/ethnic group in the overall school population as the denominator. The RI reports a racial/ethnic group's risk of receiving special education placement in a particular disability category (Donovan & Cross, 2002). The 28th Annual Report (2006) concluded that approximately 14% of all American Indian/Alaska Native students received special education services, which meant that they had the greatest risk of receiving special education services. The report also concluded that approximately

12% of all Black students received special education services, which meant that they had the second greatest risk of receiving special education services. In comparison, approximately 5% of all Asian/Pacific Island students, 8% of Hispanic students, and 9% of all White students received special education services. Typically, about 9% of all American students' ages six-to-21 received special education services during this time span.

Table 3 uses the 26th, 27th, and 28th Annual Reports to Congress, which happen to be the only reports to report risk indices, to present special education risk indices across time and racial/ethnic categories for students ages six-to-21. To provide context, Table 3 also includes the rates at which all students typically receive special education services. As evidenced in Table 3, about 9% of all students receive special education services, while approximately 12% of all Black students received special education services.

Table 3

Risk Indices Across Time and Racial/Ethnic Category

Category/Report	AI/AN	A/PI	Black	Hispanic	White	All
26th	12	4.4	12.2	8	8.7	8.9
27th	13.8	4.5	12.4	8.2	8.7	9.1
28th	13.67	4.57	12.44	8.33	8.65	9.2

Note. From the U. S. Department of Education (2004b, 2005, 2006).

Table 4 uses the 26th, 27th, and 28th Annual Reports to Congress to reflect the MR, EBD, and LD disability categories risk indices across time and racial/ethnic

groups for students' ages six-to-21. Evidenced in Table 4, Black students' risk for receiving the MR label was approximately and consistently more than four times that of Asian/Pacific Island students, three times that of Hispanic students, and nearly three times that of White students. Black students risk for receiving the EBD label remained more than six times that of Asian/Pacific Island students, three times that of Hispanic students, and double that of White students. Second to American Indian/Alaska Native students, Black students consistently held the greatest risk of receiving the LD label.

Table 4

MR, EBD, and LD Risk Indices Across Time and Racial/Ethnic Category

Category/Report	AI/AN	A/PI	Black	Hispanic	White
MR					
26th	1	.40	2	.60	.70
27th	1	.40	2	.60	.70
28th	1	.40	2	.60	.70
EBD					
26th	.90	.20	1.4	.40	.70
27th	1.1	.20	1.4	.40	.70
28th	1	.20	1	.40	.70
LD					
26th	6.6	1.7	5.5	4.7	4.1
27th	7.5	1.7	5.6	4.7	4
28th	7.50	1.73	5.65	4.74	3.86

Note. From the U. S. Department of Education (2004b, 2005, 2006).

Risk ratio. Many believe the RR to be the most valued and reliable disproportional representation mathematical calculation (Klingner et al., 2005). Risk ratios reflect a group's risk for special education placement in a particular disability category when compared to all other groups of students combined (Donovan & Cross, 2002). A group's RR is determined by dividing their risk index score by another group's risk index score. The 28th Annual Report (2006) concluded American Indian/Alaska Native students to be 1.52 times more likely to receive special education services than all other groups combined. The report further concluded the Black student to be 1.47 times more likely to receive special education services than all other groups combined. Table 5 reports risk ratios across time and racial/ethnic categories for students six-to-21 years of age. Table 5 reflects that American Indian/Alaska Native students having the greatest risk for receiving special education services may be a new trend because until the 28th Annual Report, Black students held the greatest risk for receiving special education services. Table 5 further demonstrates that historically the Black student has had the greatest risk of receiving special education services.

Table 5

Risk Ratios Across Time and Racial/Ethnic Category

Category/Report	AI/AN	A/PI	Black	Hispanic	White
25th	1.33	.47	1.45	.86	.93
26th	1.35	.48	1.46	.87	.92
27th	1.5	.50	1.5	.90	.90
28th	1.52	.49	1.47	.90	.89

Note. From the U. S. Department of Education (2003, 2004b, 2005, 2006).

Table 6 presents MR, EBD, and LD risk ratios across time and racial/ethnic categories. As evidenced in Table 6, Black students had the greatest risk of receiving the MR and EBD labels and second greatest risk of receiving the LD label. The 25th Annual Report found the Black student to be 2.99 times more likely to receive the MR label and 2.21 times more likely to receive the EBD label than all other groups of students combined. The 28th Annual Report concluded the Black students to be 2.83 times more likely to receive the MR label and 2.24 more likely to receive the EBD than all other groups of students combined. In comparison, Black students routinely had MR risk ratios nearly three times those of American Indian/Alaska Native students, approximately six times those of Asian/Pacific Island students, and nearly five times those of Hispanic and White students.

Table 6

MR, EBD, and LD Risk Ratios Across Time and Racial/Ethnic Category

Category/Report	AI/AN	A/PI	Black	Hispanic	White
MR					
25th	1.09	.44	2.99	.58	.63
26th	1.1	.45	3.04	.60	.61
27th	1.2	.50	3.0	.70	.60
28th	1.24	.47	2.83	.66	.63
EBD					
25th	1.25	.29	2.21	.52	.87
26th	1.3	.28	2.25	.52	.86

27th	1.5	.30	2.3	.50	.80
28th	1.55	.28	2.24	.54	.85
LD					
25th	1.5	.39	1.31	1.07	.88
26th	1.53	.39	1.34	1.1	.86
27th	1.8	.40	1.4	1.1	.80
28th	1.79	.40	1.42	1.15	.80

Note. From the U. S. Department of Education (2003, 2004b, 2005, 2006).

Judgmental Disabilities. I included data specific to Black students' special education representation in the MR, EBD, and LD disability categories because these categories have historically presented the most disproportional representation. In fact, concerns historically and presently remain fixed on the Black students' representation in these high incidence, or "mild" disability categories (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Many researchers consider these mild disability categories to be "judgmental" and socially constructed because they do not emanate from an organic source and cannot be objectively verified (Donovan & Cross; Gay, 2002; Gelb & Mizokawa, 1986). Researchers have also posited that special education's MR, EBD, and LD disability categories remain prone to societal perceptions and, as a result, present the most Black student disproportional representation (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Hocutt, 1996; Klingner et al., 2005; Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986; Patton, 1998). Dunn (1968) speculated about special education's judgmental categories potential to become a "dumping ground" for Black students. Gay (2002) echoed Dunn's sentiments and further iterated that she believed special education's MR, EBD, and LD judgmental

disability categories to be social constructions serving as "a dumping ground for high numbers of students of color" (p. 613).

These, the most commonly used calculating practices for determining special education representation include caveats. First, as of yet, there exists no universally accepted mathematical calculation for determining special education representation (Klingner et al., 2005). Second, the Annual Report's CI, RI, and RR do not exist without controversy. The National Research Council (2002) posited that the Annual Reports use of OSEP and OCR data evoke questions such as, (a) who categorizes students into racial/ethnic categories, (b) are students categorized by skin color, and (c) though 2000 Census data allows an individual to identify him or her self in multiple racial/ethnic categories, why does the IDEA only allow students to be placed in one of its five mutually exclusive racial/ethnic categories. These unanswered questions leave OSEP and OCR data suspect (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Further confounding issues, American schools use imprecise and non-systematic identification and classification procedures. For example, one state may classify a student with a particular disability, while another state may classify the same student exhibiting the same discrepancies with a different disability label, if they classify the student at all (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

Summary. What is overrepresentation? Harry and Anderson (1994) defined overrepresentation as a "group [being] represented in [special education programs] in a greater percentage than their percentage in the school population as a whole" (p. 602). As demonstrated via Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, the Black student has consistently been represented in special education's MR and EBD disability categories at greater rates

than their overall school representation. Thereby, according to Harry and Anderson, America's special education system disproportionally overrepresents Black students. Harry and Anderson do not hold the sole ownership for concluding the Black student to be overrepresented in special education. In fact, the USDOE's 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, and 28th Annual Reports each concluded the Black student to be represented at rates that exceed expectations based on their overall school population.

True, the mathematical calculations used herein demonstrate Black students' American special education overrepresentation, while remaining shrouded in controversy. However, it also remains true that one could dedicate an entire manuscript to deciphering mathematical calculations used to reflect special education representation. I refer those seeking further exploration of mathematics to Donovan and Cross's (2002) *Minority Students in Special and Gifted Education*, which details various mathematical approaches used to describe special education representation and the illusiveness of relying on mathematics.

For my purposes, I choose not to concentrate too heavily on mathematics for three specific reasons. First, there remains no true solution to the mathematical quandary (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Second, when debating mathematics, it becomes too easy to forget that "the issue is the relativity of placement, not absolute numbers" (Harry & Anderson, 1994, p. 602). Debating mathematics can distract from the reality the Black student has historically been special education's most disproportionately overrepresented student. Finally, and probably most imperative, the postschool transition outcomes associated with Black students exiting American special education programs remain so discouraging, and seemingly reciprocal, I find it more purposeful

and opportunistic to discuss transition outcomes, and not math. I concentrate on transition outcomes, for if more Black special students exited their special education experience and transitioned to postschool success, than their special education overrepresentation would be a benefit and not a concern.

Transition Outcomes

In 1987, the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development changed its name to the Division for Career Development and Transition (DCDT). The name change came in response to a renewed local, state, and federal emphasis on facilitating the successful "transition" from school to adulthood of students with disabilities (Halpren, 1994). In the process, the DCDT sought to update its purpose, which included students changing

> in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community . . . [that include] employment, participating in postsecondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community, and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships (Halpren, 1994, p. 4).

The DCDT further defined transition a student to adulthood to involve

> the process of enhancing transition involves the participation and coordination of school programs, adult agency services, and natural supports within the community. The [DCDT believed the] foundations for transition should be laid during the elementary and middle school years, guided by the broad concept of career development . . . [and] . . . should being no later than age 14, and students should be encouraged, to

> the full extent of their capabilities, to assume a maximum amount of responsibility for such planning (Halpren, 1994, p. 4).

The DCDT's definition conveys an understanding that (a) employment, (b) home life, (c) postsecondary education, (d) community involvement, and (e) personal and social relationships become essential components of a young adult's transition to adult life. Employment, which Halpren (1994) described as paid, competitive, and community based, he considered essential because its financial security contributes to independence. Postsecondary education becomes essential because "advanced education often creates opportunities . . . that would not otherwise be available (Halpren, 1994, p. 120). The DCDT identified community involvement, which includes transportation, leisure activities, access to community services, and citizenship, as an essential transition component because the community can be a resource that enhances an individual's quality of life (Halpren, 1994). Relationships, both personal and social, Halpren believed may be "the most important of all transition goals" (p. 120), because relationships aid with an individual's well-being, employment, leisure activities, and social adjustment. As did Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1998), the DCDT deemed employment, the home life, postsecondary education, community involvement, and relationships to be extremely important transition components that enhance an individual's quality of life.

Each DCDT transition component concentrates on an improved quality of life, which Wehmeyer and Schalock (2001) described as a multidimensional social construct centered on improved and enhanced life outcomes as perceived by the individual. Though defining quality-of-life remains illusive, it remains a central force driving

transition (Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001). If the DCDT, which the Council for Exceptional Children formed in 1976 to be a leader in the transition movement (Halpren, 1994), advanced employment, home life, postsecondary education, community involvement, and personal and social relationships as fundamental components of transitioning to a life of quality, I find it responsible to examine the Black special education students' postschool transition outcomes in relation to the DCDT's five quality of life indicators.

Employment. Halpren (1994) described employment as a paid competitive event in one's community, and believed employment led to the financial security that fostered independent living. Newman, Wagner, Cameto, and Knokey (2009) believed financial security contributed to economic independence and enhanced self-esteem. The latest National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (Newman et al., [NLTS2-2009], 2009) examined the employment status and experiences of students 4 years removed from their high school special education program. When reporting ethnic demographic data, the NLTS2-2009 reported information in relation to White, Black (African American), and Hispanic students. the report found the Black student to have highest unemployment rates at the time of the interview, and the highest unemployment rates since leaving high school. An earlier National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 report (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005), also examined employment status and experiences of students exiting high school special education programs. The report concluded Black students to hold greater unemployment rates than White students.

Delving deeper into the Black special education students' employment experience reveals that these students had held more jobs, were more likely to work in the food service industry, as cashiers, and in stocking/shipping and receiving (Newman et al., 2009). Black students were the students most likely to exit their employment by being "fired." In fact, the NLTS2-2009 reported the Black student to be more than three times likely than White students and more than 10 times than Hispanic students to be fired. The NLTS2-2009 also found Black students least likely to report liking their job "very much" and least likely to report that they had been treated "pretty well" by coworkers. In addition, the NLTS2-2009 concluded that Black students worked the most hours per week, though they remained most likely to work for the least wages per hours worked. Further, the NLTS2-2009 indicated the Black student to be least likely to receive more than nine dollars per hour worked, which was the maximum amount on the report's wage scale.

Home life. Home life becomes important to a youth transitioning to adulthood because the home life represents one of the first opportunities for independent living, which includes independent decision-making (Halpren, 1994). The NLTS2-2009 examined the home life via (a) residential independence, (b) sexual behavior, and (c) financial independence indicators. It described that these three domains as "markers on the path to adult life" (p. 99).

Residential independence. The NLTS2-2009 examined residential independence, or their independent living status, which entails a student living outside her or his parents' home, on her or his own, or with a spouse or roommate. NLTS2-2009 researchers concluded the Black special education student to be less likely than

White special education students, but more likely than Hispanic special education students, to live independently. The report also concluded the Black student to be as likely to live semi-independently, or the transitional phase between leaving the parents' home and independent living, which includes a college dormitory, military housing, a group home, etcetera, as Whites and Hispanics. It appears that, when considering the home-life, Black, White, and Hispanic students have relatively similar transition outcomes, however the NLTS2-2009 found the Black student to be least likely to report being satisfied with her or his living status.

Sexual behavior. Considering the notoriety given to sexually transmitted diseases, the ignorance surrounding many of these diseases, and the limited understanding of the sexual activities of students exiting special education programs, the NLTS2-2009 examined sexual behavior. It found the Black student, behind Hispanic students, to have the highest rates of reporting that she or he had ever had sexual intercourse. It also concluded that Black students had the highest rates of reported condom or contraceptive usage during their last sexual encounter, which may point more to the unreliability of self-reporting survey data because the NLTS2-2009 also found Black students most likely to parent. It also found the Black student least likely to be married or in a marriage-like relationship.

Financial independence indicators. The NLTS2-2009 described attaining and managing a bank account, credit card, and obtaining needed government benefits as measures of financial independence. The report found the Black special education student, behind White special education students, most likely to have a savings account or credit card, and least likely to have a checking account. In regards to income, Black

students, behind White students, reported being most likely to annually earn $25,000. Following Hispanic students, Black students were most likely to report earning an annual income between $25,001 and $50,000. Second to White special education students, Black special education students were most likely to annually earn over $50,000.

Postsecondary education. Halpren (1994) described postsecondary education as a student attending (a) four-year college or university, (b) community college, (c) vocational/technical center, or (d) private sector vocational training program. NLTS2-2009 investigative efforts concentrated on the postsecondary educational experience, and found that 45% of their respondents received postsecondary education, which mirrored the 45% of Black students who had acquired postsecondary education. The majority of these students (34%) attended or had attended a community college, 29% received postsecondary education via a vocational, business, or technical school, and 5% attended a four-year college or university. When acquiring postsecondary education, the NLTS2-2009 reported the Black student to be least likely to divulge their disability because they did not believe they had a disability, which might contribute to their mere 34% graduation/completion rate.

Community involvement. Halpren (1994) described community involvement in terms of the community either being a useful resource or barrier. The NLTS2-2009 explored social and community involvement by examining (a) community participation, (b) negative community involvement, or violence-related activities and involvement with the criminal justice system, and (c) personal and social relationships. In this section, I discuss community participation and negative community

involvement, and explore friendship interactions in the "personal and social relationships" section.

Community participation. The NLTS2-2009 depicted community participation as an important transition component as it advanced community participation as an opportunity to meet similar individuals and increase one's self-worth through contributing to the community. For the Black student, community involvement seems critical because they were second most likely to find employment via family, friends, or teachers. The NLTS2-2009 also discussed the benefits of skills developed through community participation, and disaggregated community participation into (a) taking lessons or classes outside of formal school enrollment, (b) participating in a volunteer or community service activity, and (c) belonging to an organized community or extracurricular group. NLTS2-2009 researchers found the Black student to be as likely as Whites and Hispanics to have taken lessons or classes outside of school and have volunteered or engaged in a community service activity. They reported the Black student to be least likely to be engaged in a community group (i.e., sports team, hobby club, religious group, etc.) or have a driver's license or learner's permit. They did report the Black student to be most likely to be registered voters, yet did not comment on their voting habits.

Negative community involvement. The NLTS2-2009 identified negative community involvement as events that lead to "negative repercussions, both for [the individual] and their communities" (p. 126). It separated negative community involvement into engaging in violence-related acts and engagement with the criminal justice system. The report described violence-related acts as physical fights, carrying a

weapon, and belonging to a gang. NLTS2-2009 researchers concluded the Black student to be most likely to report (a) having been in a physical fight in the previous year, (b) having carried a weapon in the previous month, and (c) being a gang member. The NLTS2-2009 presented involvement with the criminal justice system as having (a) been stopped by police for something other than a traffic violation, (b) ever been arrested or having been arrested in the past two years, (c) been in jail overnight, or (d) been on probation or parole. NLTS2-2009 researchers found the Black student most likely to be stopped by police for something other than a traffic violation, having ever been arrested, having been arrested in the past two years, having ever spent a night in jail and in spent a night in jail in the past two years, having been on probation, and having been on parole. In fact, Blacks were most likely to engage in negative community involvement on all the dimensions examined by the NLTS2-2009. In terms of respondents who had ever spent a night in jail, had spent a night in jail in the past two years, and had been on probation or parole in the past two years, their rates doubled those of Whites and more than tripled those of Hispanics.

Personal and social relationships. Personal and social relationships, Halpren (1994) considered extremely important to transitioning youth, for "the opportunity to experience effective intimate relationships is . . . common for all people" (p. 120). Personal and social relationships remain extremely important to a transitioning youth as they facilitate for support networks, a sense of well-being, personal and social adjustment, and increased leisure and employment opportunities (Halpren, 1994). They also protect against jeopardizing adolescent behaviors, and promote the caring and connection essential for today's youth (Halpren, 1994; Newman et al., 2009). The

NLTS2-2009 examined friendship interactions, and found Black students to be as likely as Hispanics and Whites to report weekly visits with friends outside of school. It also reported the Black student to be least likely to engage in daily communications via a computer, which seems imperative considering technology's ever-increasing prominence.

Summary. Considering the NLTS2-2009 found the Black student to be most likely to (a) be unemployed, (b) work in the service and manual labor industry, (c) work the most hours and receive the least hourly wages, (d) be a parent out of wedlock, (e) be in a physical fight, (f) carry a weapon, (g) be a gang member, (h) be stopped by the police, (i) spend a night in jail, (j) be on probation, (k) be on parole, (l) be incarcerated, (m) report no employment engagement, and (n) report no postsecondary educational engagement, it appears that one could make a judgment about the quality of life experienced by a Black student transitioning to adulthood from an American special program education. Before doing so, please explore postschool transition outcomes associated the MR and EBD disability categories because these two categories present the most Black student overrepresentation and some most disparaging transition outcomes.

Transition Outcomes of Students with MR

Students with MR typically remained in school until their 21st birthday. As a result, many students with MR remained least likely of all special education students to be out of school (USDOE, 2005) and, when exiting, experience "generally poorer outcomes" (Wagner, 2005a, p. 8-8). More parents perceive these students to lack functional cognitive skills and be least likely to graduate or engage in postsecondary

education (Wagner et al., 2005). Historically, students with MR composed the group second least likely to graduate with a "regular" diploma and third least likely to complete high school (USDOE, 2006). In fact, during the 2003-2004 academic year, their graduation rates only exceeded students with EBDs by .6% (USDOE, 2006). When viewing the transition outcomes of students with MR in relation to the five quality of life indicators, it appears these outcomes significantly influence their quality of life.

Employment. Cameto (2005) found 94% of students with MR reporting employment as a postschool goal. In reality, they remained least likely to engage in work, preparation for work, and apply for jobs (USDOE, 2005; Wagner et al., 2005). In fact, only 52% of these students reported that they had worked for pay at least once since exiting high school and approximately 32% of students with MR found their own job, which was second only to students with Autism (Newman et al., 2009). Generally, students with MR had held two jobs since exiting high school, worked approximately 12 hours per week, and received the least hourly pay of all students exiting special education. When employed, students with MR most likely worked in the food service industry and other unskilled labor or maintenance positions (Newman, et al., 2009). Encouragingly, over half found employment that provided benefits, which included paid vacation, sick leave, health insurance, and/or retirement benefits (Newman et al., 2009). When unemployed, students with MR were least likely to apply for jobs.

Home life. Levine and Wagner (2005) found 53% of students with MR to set as a "primary" postschool goal to live independently (outside his or her parents' home). Indeed, students with MR were most likely to live independently, married or in a

marriage-like relationship, and parent, though nearly 80% lived in a household with an income of $10,000 or less (Levine & Wagner, 2005). In 2009, this likelihood had decreased by two percentage points positioning these students third least likely to live independently and least likely to live semi-independently (Newman et al., 2009). Nearly 60% reported having ever had sexual intercourse and 75% reported using a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse. Out of school youth with MR experienced the lowest rates of having a checking account, charge account, credit card, and 92% lived with an annual income of $25,000 or less (Levine & Wagner, 2005; Newman et al., 2009).

Postsecondary education. Students with MR comprised the smallest proportion of students stating the goal of attending a two- or four-year college or university (Newman, 2005; USDOE, 2005). These students had the lowest engagement rates in school, and, behind students with multiple disabilities, were least likely to take college entrance exams (USDOE, 2004b; Wagner et al., 2005). They also remained less likely than all but students with multiple disabilities to attend vocational, business, technical school, a community college or university, and ultimately to attain any postsecondary education (Newman, 2005; Newman et al., 2009). When enrolled, students with MR were least likely to have "steady" postsecondary enrollment (Newman et al., 2009).

Community involvement. The community involvement of students with MR finds these students lest likely to take a lesson or class outside school, join a community group, communicate daily via computer, or have a savings account, checking account, and credit card (Newman et al., 2009). These students were second least likely to volunteer or engage in a community service activity, have a driver's license/permit, and

remained at the bottom of the list of registered voters (Levine & Wagner, 2005, Newman, 2005; Newman et al., 2009). Students with MR were second least likely to have engaged in a physical fight in the previous year, and were most likely to be a gang member, while nearly 10% reported carrying a weapon in the previous month (Levine & Wagner, 2005, Newman, 2005; Newman et al., 2009).

Personal and social relationships. Sixty-nine percent of students with MR visited friends outside of school, which represented the third lowest rate (Newman et al., 2009). At 12%, these students comprised the smallest proportion of students communicating daily via a computer, which suggests that these students may be missing opportunities to (a) meet individuals similar to themselves, (b) develop new skills, (c) experience shared accomplishments, and (d) contribute to the community. In addition, these limited personal and social interactions decrease many of these individual's quality of life because they do not experience the holism that evolves from "living successfully in their communities" (Newman et al., 2009, p. 117).

Transition Outcomes of Students with EBDs

In 1991, Wagner stated of students with EBD, "their difficulties in transition are particularly troubling" (p. 11-3). In 2005, she revisited her 1991 remarks and said, "a similar conclusion can be reached" (Wagner, 2005a, p. 8-7). In 2009, the NLTS2-2009 reached a similar conclusion (Newman et al., 2009). Students with EBDs comprised the largest group of students no longer in high school, though most likely, of all special education students, to exit without a regular diploma and to be a high school dropout (USDOE, 2005 & 2006; Wagner, 2005a). Matter of fact, during the 2003-2004 academic year, overall half of all students with an EBD dropped out of school

(Newman et al., 2009). Students with EBDs comprised the largest group of students living in "other" environments, such as under legal guardianship, mental health institutions, foster care, prisons, or being homeless (Wagner, 2005a). Interestingly, these students were most likely to believe they did not have a disability (Newman et al., 2009). As interesting, demographically, Black males living in poverty and a single-parent home most likely compose the EBD disability category (USDOE, 2005).

Employment. Cameto (2005) found 64% of students with EBDs reporting employment as a postschool goal. NLTS2-2009 researchers found 42% of students with EBDs employed when interviewed and 63% to have ever been employed since exiting high school (Newman et al., 2009). Typically, students with EBDs had held over three jobs since leaving high school (the most of all students) and worked the most hours per week. They generally secured employment in the food service industry (17%), as skilled laborers (10%), as cashiers (13%), or jobs classified as "other" (20%). Yet, students with EBDs remained least likely to maintain employment, despite earning the highest hourly wages of all students exiting special education programs.

Home life. Levine and Wagner (2005) found 56% of students with EBDs to set a primary postschool goal to live independently. These students were second most likely, and only second to students with MR by .3%, to be married and second most likely to live in a marriage-like relationship, though nearly 76% lived in a household with an income of $10,000 or less (Levine & Wagner, 2005). Most recently, the NLTS2-2009 found that 92% of all students with EBDs lived with an annual income of $25,000 or less (Newman et al., 2009). Students with EBDs were fourth most likely to live independently, third least likely to live semi-independently, and most likely to

report satisfaction with their living conditions (Newman et al., 2009). The NLTS2-2009 reported students with EBDs to be most likely to report ever having had sexual intercourse, parent, and be married or in a marriage-like relationship. It further concluded students with EBDs to report the lowest rates of condom usage during their last sexual intercourse. When examining financial independence, the NLTS2-2009 reported students with EBDs to be third least likely to have a savings and checking account and fifth least likely to have a credit card (Newman et al., 2009).

Postsecondary education. At 80%, students with EBDs comprised one of the largest groups of students stating the goal of attainting postsecondary education, though only 50% indicated the goal of attending a community college or university (Newman, 2005; Newman et al., 2009). Students with EBDs maintained some of the lowest postsecondary engagement rates (Wagner et al., 2005). As a group, they were less likely to attend vocational, business, technical school, a community college or university than many other groups (Newman, 2005). When attending postsecondary institutions, these students produced the highest graduation/completion rates, though they were least likely to believe they had a disability or to inform their postsecondary institution (Newman et al., 2009).

Community involvement. The community involvement of students with EBDs presents these students as third least likely to attend a class outside of school, fourth least likely to be a member of a community group, fifth most likely to be a registered voter, and sixth most likely to have acquired a driver's license/permit (Newman et al., 2009). Approximately half of these students maintained a savings account, about 35% maintained a checking account, and 22% maintained a credit card (Newman et al.,

2009). Sixty-four percent of students with EBDs had a driver's license/permit. Students with EBDs were second most likely to report carrying a weapon in the previous month and most likely to have been in a physical fight in the previous month. They remained most likely to be stopped by police for some reason other than a traffic violation, having been arrested, having spent a night in jail, and second most likely to be or have been on probation (Newman et al., 2009; Wagner, 2005a).

Personal and social relationships. Eighty-five percent of students with EBDs visited friends outside of school, which represented the fourth highest rate (Newman, et al., 2009). At approximately 19%, these students were at the bottom in regards to communicating daily via a computer (Newman, et al., 2009). This low rate may reflect limited access to computers, limited computer skills, a decreased value placed on computer communication, or any number of things.

Transition Summary

Examining the quality of life indicators of Black students exiting American special education programs (i.e., employment, home life, postsecondary education, community involvement, and personal and social relationships) seems to present enough information to determine the Black students' quality of life. In reality, this examination does not provide enough information to make such a determination or give one the ability nor power to determine another's quality of life. Examining the quality of life indicators of Black students exiting special education programs does, however, enable one to construct a most likely scenario for one of these Black students. First, the Black student will most likely exit without a standard diploma. Next, the student will most likely be unemployed. However, if employed, which exists as an "if" considering

these Black special education students have the highest unemployment rates of all students exiting special education programs, the student will most likely (a) be a service provider or an industry worker, (b) work the most hours of all students exiting special education programs, (c) receive the least wages per hour worked and, of all special education students, (d) have his or her employment terminated by being fired. In addition to this employment condition, the Black student is most likely to parent out of wedlock. When amidst the community and not at work, this Black student will be most likely to engage in a physical fight, carry a weapon, and be a gang member, which may all contribute to the Black student being most likely to be stopped by the police, arrested, placed on probation, and incarcerated.

Some may contend that I purposefully employed deficit thinking to present America's Black students' special education transition outcomes. Others may argue that I purposefully presented information pertaining to the Black students' transition outcomes in the domains American Society deems necessary for a quality life. Regardless, the inquiry remains, "so what quality of life is this." Honestly and sincerely, I am not qualified to determine another's quality of life. I am qualified, however, to understand that when asked about their feelings towards their living condition, the Black student was least likely to report being satisfied and most likely to report being dissatisfied with his or her living condition (Newman et al., 2009).

Overrepresentation Perpetuators

Numerous researchers from various disciplines have addressed the Black students' special education experience. Many of these researchers have used their voices to hold American society and its educational system and history responsible for

founding and perpetuating the Black students' special education overrepresentation. In the process, many writers produced volumes of literature, which I used to determine the five circumstances believed to perpetuate the Black students special education overrepresentation. First, an overwhelming majority of writers credit poverty as the premiere special education overrepresentation perpetuator (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Some have even posited that poverty predestines a Black student for special education placement and overrepresentation (McLoyd, 1998; USDOE, 2005). Second, concerns exist about an American educational system's special education identification and referral practices, which many believe installs and perpetuates the Black students' special education overrepresentation (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Third, many believe centuries old deficit thinking undergirds today's American educational system and perpetuates misperceptions that then lead to special education placement and its subsequent Black student overrepresentation (Patton, 1998). Fourth, some remain alarmed at the limited numbers of Black general and special educators, for these individuals' absence removes vital sources for diminishing the Black students special education overrepresentation (Tyler, Yzquierdo, Lopez-Reyna & Flipping, 2002). Fifth, limited reading proficiency seems to have significant impacts on the increased rates all students, and specifically Black students, become special education students (Kunjufu, 2005). Undoubtedly, each perpetuator has contributed to, or continues to contribute to, the disproportionate rates at which American special education programs, identify, refer, serve, and eventually overrepresent the Black student. Each perpetuator also merits investigation.

Before investigating overrepresentation perpetuators, I acknowledge America's responsibility for some of the inflated rates Black students receive special education services. Proportionally, America retains, suspends, and expels more Black students than any other student (USDOE, 2005), which equates to the Black students being most likely to be educated outside the general education classroom and in "separate" and more restrictive environments (Fierros & Conroy, 2002; USDOE, 2006). Thereby, America segregates the Black student from the fundamental academic and social curriculum needed to produce the in-school and postschool transition outcomes required to dissuade special education placement.

Poverty. In 2008, 19% of all United States citizens under 18 years of age lived in poverty, while 35% of Blacks under 18 years of age lived in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Historically, almost twice as many Blacks under 18 years of age lived in poverty when compared to the rest of American society. Specifically, when comparing Black and White youth under 18 years of age, Blacks have poverty rates typically three times those of Whites. Considering that the USDOE (2002) concluded students living in poverty to be 1.5 times more likely to be found in American special education programs, exploring the Black students' special education overrepresentation without including poverty would be irresponsible and incomplete, especially when considering that the Black student has remained America's student most likely to live in poverty (McLoyd, 1998; USDOE, 2004a).

Dunn (1968), Hocutt (1996), and Washington (1982) speculated about poverty's major influence on the overrepresented numbers of Black students receiving special education services. Outwardly, the poverty argument suggests a causal relationship

between poverty and the need for special education services, which might appear extremely foreboding for Black students and their historic situational and generational poverty. Yet, when viewed from a different perspective, the poverty argument may speak more to a correlation between poverty's impact on educators' perceptions of, and for, students living in poverty and Black students' unequal educational opportunities. Before discussing poverty's potential impacts on educator perceptions and educational opportunity, I will the poverty argument.

The poverty argument. What is poverty? McLoyd (1998) reviewed research investigating socioeconomic disadvantage, or poverty. Her research delineated a difference between socioeconomic status (SES) and poverty. McLoyd found that most researchers defined SES as, "an individual's, a family's, or a group's ranking on a hierarchy according to access to or control over some combination of valued commodities such as wealth, power, and social status" (p. 188). She posited that researchers identified SES as a multidimensional component including parental occupation(s) and education, family income, prestige, power, and lifestyle. McLoyd found researchers defining poverty as possessing "cash income" below the federal poverty threshold. The poverty threshold, or dollar amounts the United States Census Bureau uses to determine poverty, varies based on family size and the Consumer Price Index. She indicated that researchers found the federal poverty threshold unit of measurement more "advantageous" because it enabled them to connect outcomes and poverty and "more readily generalize findings to 'officially' poor individuals" (p. 188).

McLoyd's analysis of poverty's effects on a student's cognitive functioning, academic achievement, and socioemotional development suggested that poverty can be

used to predict decreased IQ scores and academic achievement, as measured by achievement test scores, grade retentions, course failures, and graduation and dropout rates. McLoyd found poverty to be linked with MR and special education placement, to which she said "the chance that children will be . . . placed in special education increases by 2-3% for every year the children live in poverty" (p. 192). According to McLoyd's review of research, the poverty argument equates to a circumstance that academically and cognitively deprives individuals, contributes to decreased in-school and postschool transition outcomes, and "predicts lower scores on tests of intelligence and cognitive functioning" (p. 198). Overall, the poverty argument seems to hinge on the fact that poverty contributes to increased drug and alcohol use during pregnancy, low infant birth weights, exposure to lead, decreased language development, inadequate health and child care, decreased participation in head start programs, and more punitive child discipline resulting in more aggressive children exhibiting conduct problems, and each has been linked to special education identification, referral, placement, and overrepresentation (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

The poverty argument from another perspective. The poverty argument suggests that situational and generational poverty predetermine a Black student's in-school and postschool transition outcomes and special education placement and overrepresentation. Yet, might the poverty argument be too simple to be considered the primary special education overrepresentation perpetuator, for overrepresentation "cannot be explained by any one factor" (Ferri & Connor, 2005, p. 95). The poverty argument may not consider that poverty "by itself does not predict Black students' academic performance" (Ford, 1993, p. 51). Furthermore, the poverty argument neither

explains why educational achievement gaps exist between Black and White students across all socioeconomic strata (Ford, personal communication, August 1, 2006). More to the point, for poverty to preordain a Black student's in-school and postschool transition outcomes, and specifically their special education placement and subsequent overrepresentation, one might expect overrepresentation to occur across all special education disability categories. In fact however, medical model disability categories, which consists of low incidence disabilities such as autism, hearing, visual, orthopedic, other health impairments, multiple disabilities, deaf, deaf-blind, and traumatic brain injury, do not present overrepresentation (USDOE, 2006). Only special education's judgmental disability categories overrepresent Black students (USDOE, 2006). Finally, the poverty argument does not explain Oswald, Coutinho, and Best's (2002) conclusions. Oswald et al. (2002) used Office of Civil Rights and National Center for Educational Statistics Common Core of Data to empirically investigate demographic, fiscal, and school-related factors' predictability of overrepresentation. They found "Black students' [disproportional overrepresentation to be] most pronounced in the relatively low-poverty communities" (Oswald, Coutinho, & Best, 2002, p. 8). How does the poverty argument address these circumstances?

Merely incriminating poverty as the major perpetrator of a Black student's decreased in-school and postschool transition outcomes and special education overrepresentation may be overly simplistic. It may preclude one from examining the effects of poverty. Renowned researchers studying the Black students' special education overrepresentation reference poverty and often discuss correlations between poverty and educator perceptions and educational opportunity (Kozol, 1991; Donovan

& Cross, 2002). In the national discourse however, these correlations seem silent and maybe muted by those seeking the minimalism of simply considering poverty as overrepresentation's primary causal agent. To thoroughly investigate poverty's contributions to overrepresentation, I address poverty's impacts on educator perceptions and the Black students' educational opportunities.

Poverty's impact on educator perceptions. First, it bears noting that White, middle-class, and females constitute the overwhelming majority of America's educators (Shealey, Lue, Brooks, & McCrary, 2005; Rosenberg, Westling, & McLeskey, 2008). It also bears posing the question, "might poverty impact educators' perceptions of students from improvised backgrounds as much as it impacts the students' in-school and postschool transition outcomes?" Washington (1982) used qualitative research methodologies to investigate educator perceptions, and found American educators preferably perceiving students believed to embody characteristics similar to the educator and/or the educators' social networks. Washington's educators did not routinely find poverty in themselves, their social networks, as a favorable characteristic, or as a trait producing future success. Ultimately, Washington's educators adversely perceived students living in poverty. Washington defined this prejudice as an "educational establishment bias," and further described it as a system that rewarded "neatness, conformity, concepts of beauty or appearance, attitudes, language, and behavior . . . defined by the White middle-class female" (p. 69). Washington eventually found educators holding favorable perceptions of White female students and disproving perceptions of Black students, especially Black males.

Rosenberg, Westling, and McLeskey (2008) forwarded Washington's beliefs

when they discussed the human tendency "to perceive difference as dividing people and behavior into two groups, *normal* and *abnormal* . . . [and tendency] to perceive those most like us as normal and those who differ from us in significant was as abnormal" [emphasis added] (p. 61). The authors further advanced that educators often define students who (a) sit and listen for extended periods, (b) complete pencil-and-paper tasks with little assistance, (c) speak using "Standard" English, (d) when redirected, look the educator in the eyes, (e) ask questions, (f) communicate using a sequential style, (g) have parents who help with homework, and (h) have parents who attend school events as normal. Afterwards, Rosenberg, et al. said, "if you are a European American, middle-class female who has spoken English form birth, these characteristics of appropriate behavior and activity probably seem normal" (p. 61).

Washington's establishment bias, which Rosenberg et al. (2008) corroborated, McLoyd (1998) also identified and deemed a "social class bias." McLoyd further considered White middle-class female educators were more likely to employ this social class bias and "provide poor children with less positive attention, fewer learning opportunities . . . less reinforcement of instances of good performance" and use academic testing, achievement and graduation rates, and special education overrepresentation to validate their lowered expectations (p. 194).

Educator expectations have garnered great attention for their impacts on student outcomes (Ferguson, 2005; Goffman, 1963; Kuykendall, 2004; Donovan & Cross, 2002). Consider that proportionally, many more "poor" Black students arrive at American schools, and this fact may lead too many educators, in response to prejudice, to perceive the Black student to lack the skills necessary to succeed. These educators'

might then partner their perceptions with lowered expectations, treat the Black student as intellectually inferior, and ultimately use special education overrepresentation to justify their initial perceptions (Ferguson, 2005; Kuykendall, 2004; McLoyd, 1998; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Rist, 1970). When discussing educator expectations in relation to the Black student and other students of color, it seems that much research incriminates White educators, which excuses others prejudices against Black students. In reality, as Rist (1970) found, skin color does not confine lowered expectations or prejudice. Rist (1970) found lowered expectations and prejudices associated with the establishment bias and social class bias in a predominately Black school.

Poverty effects on Black students' unequal educational opportunities. Many have written about poverty's ability to impact the Black students' unequal educational opportunities (Coleman, 1966; Hanushek, 1994, 1997; Hedges, Laine, & Greenwald, 1994; Kozol, 1991; McLoyd, 1998; Donovan & Cross, 2002). Though this literature differs on conclusions, a synthesis suggests poverty's influences upon American Black students' educational opportunities. For example, Black students typically attend high minority populated low income schools that routinely spend approximately 4% less per-pupil than high non-minority high income White schools (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Such a financial discrepancy equates to fewer qualified educators using evidenced-based instructional strategies, larger class sizes, and fewer college preparatory and honors classes. In sum, funding disparities equate to fewer educational opportunities for far too many Black students. Funding disparities also equate to resource denial, which Wilkins (1976) considered "responsible for the failure of many non-whites in educational situations" (p. 180).

Identification and referral. Numerous researchers consider America's identification and referral process, during which an overrepresentation of males and Black students are identified and referred for special education placement, to be another prime perpetuator of the Black students' special education overrepresentation (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Many have declared the identification and referral process as the instance when the Black students' special education overrepresentation begins and is perpetuated (Agbenyega & Jiggetts, 1999; Artiles & Trent, 1994; Chinn & Hughes, 1987; Deno, 1970; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Dunn, 1968; Fine, 2002; Gelb & Mizokawa, 1986; Harry & Anderson, 1994; Hodgkinson, 1995; MacMillan & Hendrick, 1993; MacMillan & Reschly, 1998; Mehan, et al., 1986; Ogbu, 1978; Oswald, et al., 1999; Ravitch, 2000; Trent, et al., 1998). A synthesis of overrepresentation literature highlights educators' propensity to identify and refer Black students and students living below, or perceived to live below, the poverty threshold for special education placement. To discuss concerns about the identification and referral process, I first describe both processes. Next, I explore historic concerns about both processes. Initially, I planned to explore contemporary special education identification and referral practice concerns as well, but this seemed redundant, for historic and contemporary concerns remain the same.

The identification process. Before discussing the identification process, I acknowledge that the Black/White achievement gap as a caveat. Holzman (2006) described the Black/White achievement gap in terms of the discrepancies that exist between the academic accomplishments and graduation rates of Black and White students. For instance, Black students scored lower in reading and math than their

White counterparts, when assessed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (USDOE, 2004). In fact, achievement gaps exist in "every subject at every grade level . . . between Blacks and Whites" (USDOE, 2004, p. 2). Graduation rate discrepancies also exist between Black and White students and might present the perception the many more Black students need special education services. During the 2003-2004 academic year, Arizona graduated 93% of its White non-Hispanic males and 85% of its Black males, while Wisconsin graduated 84% of its White non-Hispanic males and only 38% of its Black males, and Oklahoma graduated 74% of its White non-Hispanic males and 56% of its Black males (Holzman, 2006).

Special education maintains the purpose to provide specially designed and individualized instruction to meet the academic and/or social needs of students with learning differences (disabilities). Ferri and Conner (200) described special education's purpose a bit differently when they said, "special education has always served as a place for students who cannot or will not be assisimilated" (p. 97). The fact that some Black students fail to equal the academic accomplishments and/or graduation rates of White students might lend to the perception, or justification, that Black students need "other" educational supports (i.e., special education) to equal White students. This perception may, and has served to, justify Black students' special education overrepresentation. I do not advocate comparing Black and White students. I also am not implying that the Black student be judged based on the accomplishments of White students. I do not do either because both are contrary to special education's essence of individualized education. However, comparing the two provides insights into educational discrepancies, or gaps, which may contribute to disproportional

overrepresentation through advancing the perception that America's Black students require special education services at greater rates than White students.

Now, the identification process has multiple tracts varying across suspected disability and age and includes varied paths for students believed to have a medical model disability versus a high incidence, or judgmental disability. Medical physicians generally identify and diagnose students with medical model disabilities before the student ever receives formal education. Parents and school personnel typically identify students suspected to have a judgmental disability and this typically occurs after the student has received formal education. Overall, identification constitutes the first stage of assessment, and involves a screening process where data is collected pertaining to a student's perceived learning difficulties and the strategies employed, within the general education setting, to address perceived learning difficulties (McLoughlin & Lewis, 2001).

Specifically, the child find system searches for infants or toddlers (children under 3 years of age) demonstrating a cognitive, physical, social, emotional, adaptive, or physical development "developmental delay" in need of Part C special education services (USDOE, 2006). The child find system also searchers for infants or toddlers already diagnosed with a physical or mental disability that will result in a developmental delay (USDOE, 2006). The child find system concentrates on the homeless, wards of the state, and children exposed to domestic violence and/or abuse. Once a child has been identified, clinicians must use developmental assessments to demonstrate that the child is indeed experiencing a delay. This identification process

results in Black students being second only to American Indians/Alaskan Natives by .1% to receive special education services before age three.

The identification process for children ages three-though-five can be a tedious process, unless the child presents specific physical characteristics. Thus, educators and other professionals rely on developmental lags and behavioral characteristics for identification purposes (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Identifying children ages three-through-five is based on ensuring that (a) all children with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education with special education services designed to meet their needs, (b) the child's and family's rights are protected, (c) states receive the assistance necessary to educate students with disabilities, and (d) educational effectiveness has been assessed (USDOE, 2006). Many students transition from their Part C services into Part B services, the special education services specifically designed for students' ages three-through-21. Sixty-four percent of Black students who received Part C services continued into Part B services, which contributed to three-though-five year old Black students being as likely as all other groups combined to receive Part B services (USDOE, 2006).

The identification process for students' six-through-21 years of age includes four distinct practices for identifying a student who may be in need of special education services. First, parents may believe their child has difficulties learning and may share this information with their child's school (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Second, educators, independent of parental input, may identify a child they perceive as having learning or behavioral difficulties (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Third, school officials might recognize a student's learning or behavioral difficulties (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Fourth, most

schools screen students to identify those exhibiting academic or behavioral difficulties and/ sensory or physical difficulties (Rosenberg et al., 2008).

After identifying a student potentially in need of special education services, the school then provides early intervention services, but these services do not constitute special education placement. Early intervening services entail employing a pre-referral intervention, or an educational circumstance in which the student receives additional attention designed to address any academic or behavior concerns within the general education setting (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Response to Intervention (RTI) exists as a legally mandated early intervention service and dictates that a student only be referred for special education placement after he or she has shown no improvement in the area(s) of concern in response to strategies employed to assist the student within the general education setting. Before RTI, schools primarily employed formal, and often biased, assessment results to determine the necessity of a special education referral.

The referral process. The referral process has paths for both medical model and judgmental disability categories. Physicians typically diagnose students presenting medical model disabilities before the student ever receives formal education. Educators, or other school personnel, typically refer students suspected to have judgmental disability, and they routinely refer students whom they no longer believe they can educate (Zigmond, 1993). To refer a student for special education services, the referring agent must present documentation demonstrating a potential disability's interference in the student's education and the student's need for special education services based on the student's non response to intervention (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Essentially, schools refer students based on perceived academic and/or social differences from

"normal" students (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Special education's referral process must include a team approach containing a group of qualified persons including parents/guardians, at least one of the student's general education teachers, at least one special education teacher, a school representative, someone to interpret assessment results (school psychologist), any others with expertise essential to the student's education, and the student when applicable and does not have to assign a disability label (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Rosenberg et al., 2008).

The referral process contains four formal stages. First, a referring school must submit a written referral form to a designated school official. Educators, or other school personnel, prepare written referrals in which they express concerns about a student's in-school academic or behavioral performance (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Second, the school must present documentation such as screening results, pre-referral interventions used with the student, and/or educator produced performance or behavioral records to the school's designated special education placement specialist. At this point, the team reviews documentation to determine (a) if additional information is needed, (b) if the student has a disability, (c) the student's educational needs, and (d) the student's present academic achievement levels (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Third, after determining that the student has a disability, the team must develop the student's initial individual education plan. To develop the initial individual education plan, the school must present a written copy of evaluation results and consider information from multiple sources. The team must also consider (a) if the potential disability results from inadequate reading or math instruction, or limited English proficiency, and (b) if the child does not meet special education requirements (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Fourth,

after developing the individual education plan, the team determines the least restrictive educational environment. To do so, the team determines the services closest in atmosphere, structure, process, and proximity to the student's general education environment, and then they place the student in special education and in the least restrictive educational environment.

Historic concerns about special education's identification and referral process. To discuss historic concerns about special education's identification and referral practices and their contributions to Black students' special education overrepresentation, I emphasize Dunn's (1968) seminal work. Dunn's work has been credited as being one of the first to address inconsistencies within America's educational system and educators' pejorative perceptions about Black students and students living in poverty. His discussion concentrated on the "mildly retarded," though I believe it applies to all judgmental disability categories. Dunn spoke of general education practices that identify and refer students from diverse backgrounds (Black students) to special education. Much of his discussion focused on general educators' inability, or unwillingness, to educate Black students and other students from diverse backgrounds. Dunn concluded by foreshadowing that special education would become a "dumping ground" for Black students and students from improvised backgrounds.

Hocutt (1996) advanced Dunn's work, and posited that the Black student had an increased likelihood of special education identification and referral in response to educators' propensity to perceive them as diverse. She acknowledged that White students and White and middle class females constitute the majority of America's classrooms. Hocutt believed American classroom demographics contributed to

educators perceiving Black students as diverse and lead to the increased rates at which they identify and refer Black students for special education. Together, Dunn and Hocutt discussed American classrooms primarily consisting of White middle class students and White middle class female educators and Black students perceived to be diverse, which increases a Black student's likelihood of special education placement.

Deficit Thinking. The history and deficit thinking that many believe undergirds the Black students' special education overrepresentation I believe manifests from America's slave society's need to secure and maintain its human labor force. In this endeavor, the slave society dehumanized the Black student with the stigma of being intellectually inferior, and eventually developed an educational system based on the misperception Blacks as inherently and intellectually inferior (Fanon, 1963; Rodney, 1987; Williams, 1987). This educational system "perceived academic differences as a justification for racial segregation and exclusion" (Ferri & Connor, 2005, p. 99). This system also denied Black students formal education based on the misperception that they were too ignorant to benefit from formal education (Ogbu, 1978). This educational system became obsolete during the 1960s when America experienced 1954 Brown versus Board of Education decision and the 1960's Civil Rights Movement. Together, the Brown versus Board decision and the Civil Rights Movement criminalized the educational segregation of previously excluded groups such as Blacks and students with disabilities. Yet, when "segregation could no longer be justified based on the rationale of race, a new system of talking about student difference had to be created. This deficit way of thinking about differences would lead to . . . special education" (Ferri & Connor, 2005, p. 99), for special education "reified the racial divisions that [Brown

versus the Board and the Civil Rights Movement were] designed to dismantle" (Ferri & Connor, 2005, p. 95).

Researchers have described deficit thinking as perceiving something or someone to be lacking in nature (MacMillan & Hendrick, 1993; Trent, et al., 1998). Patton (1998) suggested that America employed deficit thinking when developing its educational system to maintain "social and economic stratification . . . [through teaching the] values, attitudes, and needs that reflect the dominant social, economic, and political groups" (p. 27). He further suggested that deficit thinking perpetuates today's Black student special education overrepresentation. Others believe as did Patton and highlight the "child saving theory of education" and "social control model of education" for their deficit thinking and historic influences upon special education's Black student overrepresentation (MacMillan & Hendrick, 1993; Trent, et al., 1998).

The child saving theory of education. The child saving theory of education pivots on the belief that, though some students were "subnormal," America had a moral obligation to "save" these students (Trent, et al., 1998). Edouard Seguin became a leading proponent of the child saving theory of education, and advocated that these subnormal students receive treatment in residential facilities to remediate problems associated with their nervous system (Trent, et al., 1998). Seguin's treatments included kindness, minimum restraint, structure, routing, consistency in treatment, *obedience to authority, and conformity to rules* [emphasis added] (Trent, et al., 1998).

MacMillan and Hendrick (1993) believed that today's special education birthed partially from the child saving theory of education and its needed academic and social curriculum to accommodate the growing population of diverse students. In other words,

America perceived, and thereby, treated Black students as intellectually inferior objects and sought to save these students through Seguin's obedience and conformity. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) published ethnographical research findings from his time spent observing "oppressed" people. His findings revealed a significant purpose residing within the child saving theory of education, as he advanced that treating individuals as objects to be saved contributed to their disempowerment and converted them into masses to be manipulated, which seems a perfect for a society seeking to keep Blacks subservient.

The social control model of education. Trent, et al. (1998) believed that sociocultural, sociopolitical, and economic forces developed the social control model of education, based on misperceptions and the need to segregate students with disabilities, immigrants, Native Americans, students living in poverty, and Black students from wealthy White students. This theory, founded on the belief that American society needed self-sufficient and self-supporting individuals to do jobs wealthy Whites would not do, becomes deficit thinking because it views the individual as having a problem (MacMillan & Hendrick, 1993; Trent, et al., 1998). Researchers have linked the social control model of education to social Darwinism, America's enslavement of Africans and Blacks, and the genetic testing used to scientifically validate Black students' intellectual inferiority (MacMillan & Hendrick, 1993; Trent, et al., 1998).

Fierros and Conroy (2002) reasoned that deficit thinking resulted in the development of special educations judgmental disability categories and definitions, particularly its LD, MR, and EBD disability categories. Gelb and Mizokawa (1986) believed that, since students typically receive these labels from school personnel, the

process remains susceptible to perception, subjectivity, and deficit thinking. Fierros and Conroy argued that deficit thinking prompted special education to design its LD, MR and EBD definitions to separate Black and White students, which Gelb and Mizokawa (1986) supported. To discuss deficit thinking's possible impacts on special education's LD, MR and EBD definitions, I now briefly discuss each definition. I then explore the history and deficit thinking potentially founding and supporting each definition.

The LD, MR, and EBD disability definitions. It bears reiterating that many researchers consider special education's LD, MR, and EBD disability categories to be social constructions (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Gay, 2002; Gelb & Mizokawa, 1986). This consideration is significant because societal practice develops social construction based on perception, or misperception (Gelb & Mizokawa, 1986). In other words, judgmental disability categories may be man-made tools for dividing individuals based on perceived abilities. Table 7 presents special education's LD, MR, and EBD disability category definitions.

Table 7

LD, MR, and EBD Disability Definitions

Disability	Definition
Learning Disability	A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which man manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. It does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (Rosenberg et al., 2008).

Mental Retardation (Intellectual Disability)	A disability characterized by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills . . . [that] originates before age 18 (American Association on Mental Retardation, 2002, p. 1).
Emotional/Behavioral Disturbance	A condition exhibiting on or more of the following characteristics of a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: 1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors 2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers 3. Inappropriate types of behavior of feelings under normal circumstances 4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depressions 5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems The term includes schizophrenia, but does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (Rosenberg et al., 2008).

As evidence in Table 7, the LD definition appears an extremely accommodating and inviting definition that specifically includes students demonstrating an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. All students have this imperfection, which contributes to the LD category's history as special education's most populated category. The American Association on Mental Retardation (2002) defined MR, which is now referred to as an intellectual disability though the definition has remained the same (USDOE, 2006). The MR definition seems to hinge on intellectual shortcomings and "adaptive behavior." Essentially, students receive the MR label based on demonstrated academic difficulties or failure and behaviors diverse from the normal student. The EBD definition seems to concentrate on comparison and subjectivity, as it hints to students' deviation from the "norm." For

example, it defines a student with an EBD as one who does not build or maintain "satisfactory" relationships with peers and teachers, which begs the question as to whom determines and what constitutes "build," "maintain," and especially "satisfactory." Table 7 presents the LD, MR, and EBD disability definitions, which exist as the special education categories most likely to house Black students. Table 7 does not, however, present the history nor deficit thinking some believe founded and currently supports each definition's contributions to the Black students' special education overrepresentation.

History, deficit thinking, and the LD definition. The LD definition emerged during the 1954 Brown versus Board decision and the Civil Rights Movement and appears an all-inclusive definition. However, the definition omits students whose disability results from sensory impairments, physical impairments, MR, an EBD, or from environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. Ferri and Connor (2005), in response to the history and deficit thinking they believed founded the LD definition, considered these caveats as a means to install "segregation within integration" (p. 98). Ferri and Connor do not exist alone in their belief. Sleeter (1995) posited that America developed the LD definition, which defines a disability that at its historic beginnings Whites saturated, to enable White parents to explain their children's' academic difficulties through the use of a less stigmatizing label, and in the absence of the intellectually inferior Black student.

History, deficit thinking, and the MR disability definition. When discussing history, deficit thinking, and the MR definition, four circumstances appear salient. First, resistance and a centuries' old belief about the Black students' intellectual inferiority

accompany the Black students' American entrance into integrated formal education (Ferri & Connor, 2005). This resistance and belief, when accompanying an American society in still favoring segregated schooling, contributed to the MR definition being designed and employed to resegregate American classrooms, for after all, students with MR remain special education's group most likely to be educated outside the general education setting (Ferri & Connor, 2005; USDOE, 2006). Second, while working in concert, deficit thinking's child saving theory of education and social control model of education seems appropriately designed to maintain the Black student as a source of human labor. The child saving theory of education helped install the misperception about Black students' intellectual inferiority and need for obedience and conformity (Trent, et al., 1998). The social control model of education then provided the purpose for segregated settings. As a result, America breathed life into the MR category and definition with the purpose to perpetuate the history and deficit thinking that contributed to maintaining the Black student as a subservient human labor source. Third, Rosenberg et al.'s (2008) summation about the American tendency to perceive shared commonalities as normal and difference as abnormal appears to indicate that the Black student would be at greater risks for special education placement. The Black student would have this increased risk because, historically, the Black student has represented the most diverse (abnormal) student in American society, and specifically classrooms predominantly occupied by White middle class female educators and White middle class students. Finally, many recognize the MR category's history of being special education's most negatively stigmatized disability category (Ferri & Connor,

2005; Jordan, 2005), which seems well suited for a student historically celebrated as America's most intellectually inferior student.

History, deficit thinking, and the EBD definition. To discuss history, deficit thinking, and the EBD definition, I refer to Henley, Ramsey, and Algozzine's (2006) interpretation of the EBD definition. Their interpretation defined a student with an EBD to exhibit "persistent and consistent problems that interrupt their own or others learning" (Henley, Ramsey, & Algozzine, 2006, p. 30). Bear in mind that American educators have historically perceived Black students, more than any other group of students, to lack high social skills, self-control, be easily distracted, and exhibit "problem behaviors" (Ferri & Connor, 2005; USDOE, 2002). These ratings seem to suggest that educators would be more likely to perceive Black students to exhibit Henley et al.'s (2006) persistent and consistent problems that interrupt the educational process. These ratings also suggest that educators would be more likely to perceive Black students to exhibit "problem behaviors," which might then contribute to the Black student's EBD special education overrepresentation.

The EBD definition seems based on comparisons between normal and abnormal students, which does not bode well for a Black student who has historically been an American classroom's epitome of diversity. Third, the EBD definition defines a student with an EBD as one who behaves inappropriately under normal circumstances, which begs the questions as to what is normal. What is normal for a Black American student particularly when considering the two's shared history? What is normal especially when considering that Rosenberg, et al. (2008) pondered if "disturbed behavior is a natural reaction to the mad world around us" (p. 182)? What is normal when

considering that the Black student is America's student most likely to attend high minority populated, low income, overcrowded and violent schools that contribute to fear, stress, and learned helplessness (Donovan & Cross, 2002), which Rosenberg et al. (2008) believed increased a student's likelihood of receiving the EBD diagnosis.

Reading. Kunjufu's (2005) *Keeping Black Boys Out of Special Education* reported that 80% of all students referred for special education services read below grade level. He then posed a most intriguing inquiry when he asked, "do we have a reading problem or special education problem" (p. 49). Kunjufu's inquiry becomes most intriguing when considering that reading difficulties constitute one of the major reasons for special education identification, referral, and placement (Donovan & Cross, 2002). His inquiry becomes even more intriguing when correlated with special education's purpose to provide specific instruction meeting the unique needs of a child with a disability. Question, if special education exists to provide individualized instruction to meet a student's need(s) and Black students routinely score below White students on reading aptitude assessments (USDOE, 2004a), which many use to gauge academic progress, might then Black students appear to need special education services at greater rates than White students. If so, does the Black students' special education overrepresentation seem more understandable? Question, might the Black students' special education overrepresentation result from limited reading proficiency? Question, might America and its Black students not have a special education problem, but a reading problem?

The Black Educator. Some researchers believe the limited representation of Black educators perpetuates the Black students' special education overrepresentation

(Patton, 1998; Tyler et al., 2002). They hold this belief for four specific reasons. First, Black educators' shared experiences have historically served as a source of inspiration for Black students and parents/guardians (Franklin, 1984). Second, the Black parent/guardian has historically believed that Black educators related better to Black students and parents/guardians and had more empathy and sympathy for the Black student and his or her condition (Franklin, 1984). In this role, the Black educator serves as a connection between an American education and the Black student and community. The Black educators' abilities to unite the Black student and community with the American educational system remains critical, for historically, many Black community members viewed the American educational system as an agent of their subjugation, and subsequently devalued and distrusted and devalued their American education (Fordham, 1988). The Black educators' abilities to link the Black community and the American educational system could serve as a means for Black students to acquire the education necessary to find postschool transition success, while retaining Black community membership. We will explore this further in later sections. Third, researchers have posited that Black educators' presence addresses concerns about the Black students' special education overrepresentation by facilitating academic success, improving comfort levels for students and parents/guardians, ending cycles of negative lowered expectations, and enhancing the education of all students by contradicting stereotypes (Tyler, et al., 2002). Lastly, the Black educator contributes to decreased Black student special education overrepresentation through contradicting the misperception that the Black student is intellectually inferior (England & Meier, 1985; Stewart, Meier, LaFollette, & England, 1989; Tyler, et al., 2002). The Black educator's

ability to contradict misperceptions pertaining to the Black students' intellect remains essential because this contradiction provides opportunities to address self-fulfilling prophecy cycles that contribute to the decreased academic outcomes that perpetuate special education identification, referral, placement, and overrepresentation (England & Meier, 1985; Stewart et al., 1989; Tyler et al., 2002).

Recently, the National Education Association reported that 90% of its educators to be White and less than 8% to be Black (Toppo, 2003), while Ford reported that White educators constituted between 90% and 92% of America's public school educators (personal communication, April 19, 2007). Nettles and Perna (1997) concluded that Black male educators constituted some 4% and 2.2% of general and special educators respectively, though Black males constitute special education's most overrepresented group of students. Shealey, Lue, Brooks, and McCrary (2005) more recently concluded that students of color constituted 38% of all American special education students, while individuals of color constituted only 14% of all American special educators. They further predicted that, by 2009, students of color would constitute 40% of all American special education students and educators of color would constitute only 12% of all American special educators. It appears that the Black educators' limited representation, though history details the essential benefits Black educators afford to all students, will be ongoing because of the decreased and still decreasing numbers of Blacks enrolled in teacher preparatory programs (Tyler et al., 2002).

When addressing the Black educators' presence, or lack thereof, researchers typically do not address the "type" of Black educator necessary to produce the

aforementioned outcomes. Most do not even address the fact that one does not have to be Black to educate a Black student. Researchers more readily focus on the need to produce Black educators and the ongoing concerns about the Black educators' representation. Most do not address the fact that Black students need Black educators personifying the empowerment I believe these students so desperately need and seek.

Overrepresentation Perpetuators' Summary

Special education literature seems saturated with circumstances believed to perpetuate the Black students' special education overrepresentation. I explored research's five most articulated perpetuators, but before doing so, I inserted a personal belief about a perpetuator that seems too often omitted. I concentrated on the fact that America has historically retained, suspended, expelled, and educated the Black student outside general education classrooms at greater rates than any other student. In doing so, America segregates Black students from the vital academic and social curricula needed to produce in-school and postschool success, which then may contribute to their special education identification, referral, placement, and subsequent overrepresentation.

According to researchers, five perpetuators remain salient in the Black student special education overrepresentation phenomenon. Foremost, most researchers present the poverty argument, which maintains that poverty and its effects predetermine a Black student's in-school and postschool outcomes that then contribute to special education placement. When examined thoroughly, the poverty argument appears incomplete in its abilities to predict a Black student's educational outcomes. The poverty argument also remains incomplete in its abilities to address the how and the why medical model disabilities do not present overrepresentation and how and why

more affluent neighborhoods pronounced the most Black student overrepresentation. Second, I explored identification and referral practices to find these practices historically fraught with concerns about educator perception and subjectivity that then contribute to Black students and students from, or perceived to be from, impoverished backgrounds to be more likely to identified and referred for special education services. Third, I explored the deficit thinking that numerous individuals believed founded and still supports many overrepresentation perpetuators. Many consider this deficit thinking, founded on the perception that White students were intellectually superior to Black students, to be a leading contributor to special education's judgmental disability category definitions that then facilitate the Black students' overrepresentation in its more negatively stigmatized disability category. In doing so, this deficit thinking contributes to segregated integration. Fourth, I explored limited reading proficiency's potential influence upon overrepresentation. I found that that the overwhelming majority of students placed in special education read below grade level and that the Black student routinely scored below White students on reading aptitude assessments, which could contribute to the perception that more Black students need special education services. Lastly, I explored the Black educators' limited representation to the detriment of all students. It appears that, though having Black educators in American classrooms provides benefits to all students, fewer and fewer Blacks currently enter teacher preparatory programs.

In sum, researchers most often present poverty, identification and referral practices, deficit thinking, reading, and the limited representation of Black educators as the primary perpetuators of the Black students' special education overrepresentation. It

seems that these perpetuators have received great attention. Yet, it seems that an understudied perpetuator of the Black students' special education overrepresentation resides in their postschool transition outcomes. Black students experience transition outcomes, such as poverty and limited to no postsecondary education, that contribute to their increased risks of special education placement. Postschool transition outcomes, which I believe cultivate a repetitive special education placement cycle, seem to go unvisited as most address poverty, identification and referral practices, deficit thinking, reading, and the limited representation of Black educators when researching, developing, and disseminating "solutions."

Proposed Solutions

To make a long story short, no solutions exist. To compound matters, there exists little scientific research investigating possible solutions, though many have proposed methods for addressing overrepresentation. Disaggregating research literature illuminates five methods proposed to address the Black students' special education overrepresentation. First, Donovan & Cross (2002) posited that increased funding might provide Black students with the equalized educational opportunities needed to enable them to produce better in-school and postschool outcomes. Second, Kunjufu (2005) proposed the use of pre-referral interventions to address the subjectivity inherent in the identification and referral process. Third, Shealey et al. (2005) believed increased (a) awareness, (b) empirical research efforts, and (c) legislation might address the problem. They also posited that improved (a) federal data collection efforts, (b) classroom management, and (c) educator quality offered promise for decreasing the increased rates at which special education serves Black students. Fourth, Kunjufu

(2005) proposed the use of pre-referral reading interventions to curtail limited reading proficiency's impacts on a Black student's special education placement. Fifth, Tyler et al. (2002) believed that increasing the numbers of Black educators might enable Black students to find more academic success, improved comfort, and the models needed to address and end self-fulfilling prophecy cycles that contribute to decreased educational outcomes.

These proposals contain five shared commonalities. First each proposal seems positioned to address researchers' identified major perpetuators. Second, each proposal lacks scientific validity. Third, neither proposal nor any combinations address postschool transition outcomes that contribute to the repetitive cycle I believe perpetuates overrepresentation. Fourth, each proposal exists as a systems and/or educator directed initiative, which essentially silences and disempowers the Black student from addressing their very own special education overrepresentation. In silencing and disempowering the Black student, these proposals might actually adhere to deficit thinking's child saving theory of education that perceives the Black student too inferior to address their very own special education overrepresentation, and are thereby in need of begin saved. In silencing and disempowering the Black student, these proposals might adhere to the social control model of education that seeks to keep the Black student subservient. Finally, neither proposal has produced any noteworthy decrease in the rates special education indentifies, refers, serves, and overrepresents the Black student.

Summary. To date, many of the proposed solutions to the Black students' special education overrepresentation seem fixated on providing solutions in accordance

with literature's five major overrepresentation perpetuators. In return, literature remains littered with conceptual approaches to the overrepresentation phenomenon, with the overwhelming majority of this literature void of the Black students' voice and presence. These conceptual approaches might actually perpetuate overrepresentation by continuing the deficit thinking that some believe founded the Black students' special education overrepresentation. Through silencing and disempowering the Black student, these proposals might actually disempower the Black student and perpetuate their special education overrepresentation.

Presently, there exists a concentrated effort to employ culturally responsive teaching practices to address many of the issues the Black student experiences (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Many believe culturally responsive pedagogies can address the Black students' special education overrepresentation and lack of solutions to phenomenon, for many believe the phenomenon, as well as many other educational concerns the Black student experiences, results from education's exclusion of the Black student (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Gay, 2000, 2002; Nieto, 1999, 2002/2003; Valenzuela, 1999; Villegas, 1991). Many believe that culturally responsive teaching might address overrepresentation through including the Black student as a whole individual and include them as valued members of America's educational (Donovan & Cross; Gay, 2000, 2002; Nieto, 1999, 2002/2003; Valenzuela, 1999; Villegas, 1991).

Culturally responsive teaching emerged from a constructivist framework, and pivots on the belief that "learners actively construct their own knowledge and that, in order to construct knowledge, curriculum emphasis, classroom interaction, and classroom dynamics must change in fundamental ways" (Shealey et al., 2005, p. 117).

Culturally responsive teaching centers on the belief that "students can excel in academic endeavors when their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning and development, and are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources" (Klingner et al., 2005, p. 8). Proponents of culturally responsive teaching believe that it might include the Black student by including their identity in "meaningful and relevant activities and in experiences that are directly linked to their background experience" (Shealey et al., 2005, p. 118). Thus, many proponents believe culturally responsive teaching might address the Black students' special education overrepresentation by actually realizing special education's promise of individualized education.

Summary of the Black Students' Special Education Overrepresentation

In summary, the Black students' special education overrepresentation discourse has been ongoing for over four decades, and it seems that much of the discourse has been rehashed to the point of being as repetitive and predictable. I have just concluded my section devoted to the overrepresentation discourse and, in the process, found that much of the research and literature repetitive as the phenomenon it addresses. The discourse sounds something like the following.

First, we begin with an argument about whether special education truly overrepresents the Black student. In this discussion, we hear various voices arguing the mathematics used to reflect special education representation, when in reality, the mathematics debate serves as a distracter, for American special education programs do in fact overrepresent Black students in their judgmental disability categories.

Second, we hear a discourse virtually silent in regards to the postschool transition outcomes associated with Black students exiting special education programs. This silence precludes researchers and consumers from understanding that Black students exit special education to experience extremes, and extremes that exist as many of the worst outcomes of all students exiting a special education program. More troubling, disappointing, and tragic, the Black student experiences special education postschool transition outcome extremes that sentence future Black students to repeat their parents' special education. These future Black special education students will experience the same extreme postschool transition outcomes and increased likelihood of producing future special education students. Thus, the repetitive cycle begins anew and the Black students' special education overrepresentation is renewed.

Third, we hear voices speculate about clichéd perpetuators' propensities to maintain the Black students' special education overrepresentation. The perpetuator component of the overrepresentation discourse seems strictly concentrated on specific perpetuator's potential impacts on the overrepresentation phenomenon. Yet, of course, when discussing perpetuators, most cite poverty as the prime overrepresentation perpetuator. When most illuminate poverty as "the" perpetuator, they do so as if poverty has the ability to predetermine a student's in-school or postschool outcomes, which it does not. Also, in the perpetuator discourse, we hear about the (a) subjectivity inherent in identification and referral practices, (b) deficit thinking that founded overrepresentation, (c) limited reading proficiency that seems to be the major perpetuator of all special education placements, and (d) Black educators' limited representation and how it removes potentially influential Black models and conduits

between schools and the Black community. Interestingly, most researchers do not address what kind of Black educator the Black student needs, which seems typical because the overrepresentation discourse omits many details. The discourse omits details pertaining to postschool transition outcomes' potential impacts on the overrepresentation phenomenon and, as a result, researchers generally only address the most articulated perpetuators.

Fourth, when "experts" join the overrepresentation discourse to propose solutions to address overrepresentation, we hear of systems and educator oriented initiatives that lack scientific investigation. We hear of equalized funding, pre-referral identification, referral, and reading interventions, increased local, state, and national awareness, improved educator quality, and the need for more Black educators. We do not hear voices rejoicing in their proposals demonstrated abilities to decrease overrepresentation rates. We cannot and will not hear these rejoicing voices because there exist no solution to the overrepresentation phenomenon.

It is my position that what we hear remains eerily similar to the deficit thinking that the Black student has experienced since arriving on North American soil as an enslaved African. What we hear reminds me of the deficit thinking that removes the Black student from being active causal agents in addressing their very own special education overrepresentation and, in the process, disempowers the Black student. What we hear reminds me of pretentious rhetoric, which is why I now add my voice and address what I see. I see a self-fulfilling prophecy cycle. I see a self-fulfilling prophecy cycle that began with the Black students entrance into American history. I see a self-fulfilling prophecy cycle founded upon misperception.

The Black Student's Entrance into American History

Before discussing the Black students' entrance into American history, I acknowledge that the Black students' history exists as a tale of firsts. The Black students' history includes being the planet's first peoples and being the people to establish the planet's first "civilizations" (Fanon, 1963; Rodney, 1987; Williams, 1987). The Black students' history includes Timbuktu, the planet's first "university," and the university where Europeans came to learn to read, write, and acquire books (Fanon, 1963; Rodney, 1987; Williams, 1987). The Black students' history includes being the world's educational center. However, the Black students' American history stands as a direct contradiction to the Black students' history of firsts. In many ways the Black students' American history stands as a tale of eliminating the Black students' true history from the world's memories and annals. I inserted these facts for two specific reasons. First, the Black students' American history often omits this information and preaches that the Black student began as a slave. Second, these facts juxtapose the Black students' American history with their true history and illuminate the misperception of the Black student as inherently and intellectually inferior to the European.

The Black students' entrance into American history survives as a tale of enslavement and the misperception of being inherently and intellectually inferior chattel. The tale opens between the 16th and 19th centuries when Europeans transported nearly 10 million Africans to the "New World" in exchange for items such as cotton, tobacco, and primarily sugar (Fogel, 1989). Europe desired sugar in quantities New World plantations were not prepared to deliver, though New World plantation proprietors understood the great financial gains sugar production promised. Thus, New World plantation

proprietors sought to mass-produce sugar. To maximize their sugar production and subsequent financial gains dictated that these plantations develop a new labor system, which they found in the "gang system" of labor (Fogel, 1989). Gang labor, as a system of labor and control, included diversified, simplified, and supervised responsibilities (Fogel, 1989). It also required an increased human labor force (Fogel, 1989).

At the time, European indentured servants comprised New World plantations' primary human labor force and held rights that made it unlawful for plantation owners to set work schedules, use strict punishments, or penalize inadequacy (Fogel, 1989). European indentured servants also held the "unwillingness to be dehumanized," which severely hampered New World plantation owners' abilities to implement the gang labor system (Fogel, 1989, p. 25). European indentured servants' power restricted the gang labor system's implementation because to transition them to the gang labor system necessitated force and brutality (Fogel, 1989). Plantation owners understood this restriction and began seeking a new source of human labor, which they found in Africa. As a result, as early as 1502, Spanish logs record "Blacks" as cargo transported across the Atlantic Ocean into chattel enslavement (Fogel, 1989).

While Europeans enslaved Blacks and transported them to the New World to work on gang labor plantations, "The Church" held dominion over the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade. The Church needed convincing that the "slave trade" was not inhumane. Interestingly, while The Church remained unconvinced about the slave trade's continued existence, numerous written and unwritten mandates, many supported by science, surfaced that designated Blacks as savage and inherently and intellectually inferior (Fogel, 1989). Essentially, these written and unwritten decrees designated Blacks as

undeserving of the same treatments afforded a European (Fogel, 1989). At the time, The Church maintained the mission to bring "all the primitive heathens . . . into its fold" (Fogel, 1989, p. 34) and used the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade to advance its mission while bringing god to the Black "heathens." The Church eventually consented to the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade's continued existence and allowed European plantation owners to erect laws to regulate the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade (Fogel, 1989). In response, New World plantation owners erected laws designating Blacks as inherently and intellectually inferior chattel and also differentiated equitable treatments for Blacks and Europeans. Fogel (1989) believed this to be the point Europeans introduced and practiced a racism based on skin color and founded on the misperception that Blacks were inherently and intellectually inferior to their European "masters."

In effect, a business decision, based on maximizing sugar production and New World plantation profits, landed Black students on American soil enslaved amidst a religious slave society needing a human labor force and pacification from their chattel enslavement of this human labor source (Fanon, 1963; Fogel, 1989; Rodney, 1987; Williams, 1987). Members within the slave society, including the Church, needed pacification because the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade included Blacks being "mutilated, tortured, gibbeted alive and left to starve to death, burnt alive, flung into coppers of boiling sugar, whipped to death, overworked, underfed, and obliged from sheer lack of any clothing to expose their nudity to the jeers of the poor whites" (Johnston, 1910, p. 217-218).

Summary. The tale of Black students' entrance into American history begins with Black producing many of history's first, which includes educational firsts. The tale

then presents enslavement and Europeans misperceiving Blacks as inherently and intellectually inferior chattel. The tale originates from the human labor force needed to satisfy Europe's sweet tooth. The tale then pivots on Blacks' enslavement amidst a slave society needing a system to manufacture and control a subservient working class to perform tasks beneath Europeans (Fogel, 1989; MacMillan & Hendrick, 1993; Trent, et al., 1998). Next, the tale details the practices the slave society used to justify Blacks' enslavement and assuage the slave society's religious constituency, which becomes a tale of misperceiving Blacks as inherently and intellectually inferior to Europeans (Fanon, 1963). The tale of the Black students' entrance into American history exists as a tale of historic firsts, enslavement, and misperceptions needed to justify their enslavement, and a system of control. Simplistically stated, the tale of the Black students' entrance into American history exists as a tale of European practices and misperceptions employed to transform the Black student from a human being with a glorious history into a slave with no history other than that provided by Europeans (Fanon, 1963).

A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Cycle

The Black students' entrance into American history exists as a tale of enslavement and misperception, but does not conclude at the Black students' initial entrance into American history. The tale continues and presents a system of control employed to keep the Black student subservient. This portion of the tale includes systematic practices developed and employed to install and perpetuate the misperception of the Black student as inherently and intellectually inferior to Europeans. This tale foreshadows the special education overrepresentation phenomenon and presents

practices used to train the world, including Black students, to perceive Blacks as inferior. The tale, I believe, illuminates the system of control as a self-fulfilling prophecy cycle that may have initiated and preyed upon the Black students' double-consciousness.

Merton (1957) defined a self-fulfilling prophecy as "a false definition of [a] situation [that evokes] a new behavior, which makes the originally false conception come true" (p. 423). Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy cycle begins with a misperception, which leads individuals to develop behaviors in response to, or in justification of, the misperception. As a result of the "new behaviors," misperception in many instances becomes a justifiable reality. Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy definition contains three noteworthy assertions. First, someone develops a misperception. In the Black students' case, Europeans developed the misperception of the Black student as an inherently and intellectually inferior savage. Second, based on misperception, Merton believed that individuals develop new behaviors. In regards to the Black student, Europeans developed new behaviors such as stripping students of their native African names and languages, destroying the Black family, and denying formal education to Black students (Fanon, 1963; Fogel, 1989; Ogbu, 1978; Rodney, 1982; Williams, 1987). Blacks also developed new behaviors such as acts of ignorance and stupidity, which they used to avoid many of the cruelties associated with their enslavement (Staples, 1973). Third, misperception becomes a justifiable reality. In the Black students' case, some may choose to believe that their special education overrepresentation itself demonstrates their inherent and intellectual inferiority.

I now use Merton's definition to illustrate the self-fulfilling prophecy cycle the slave society might have installed as a hegemonic system of control and how this cycle might found and perpetuate today's special education Black student overrepresentation. To do so, I first describe the misperception of the Black students' inferiority. Next, I identify new behaviors, which misperception may have founded to advance the self-fulfilling prophecy. Third, I present data that suggests, to those seeking validation, that misperception has become reality, and that the Black student is indeed inferior. Finally, I present Rist's (1970) ethnographic research as evidence of this self-fulfilling prophecy.

Misperception. Acknowledged earlier, many slave society members misperceived the Black student to be inherently and intellectually inferior chattel. The slave society created this misperception based on two needs. First, the gang system of labor required a large human labor force, which European plantation owners found through enslaving Africans (Fogel, 1989). Second, Europeans needed to misperceive Blacks as inherently and intellectually inferior to pacify its constituency and justify the Black students' chattel enslavement (Fanon, 1963; Fogel, 1989). In response to these two circumstances, Europeans developed numerous depictions of the Black student as inherently and intellectually inferior.

The numerous examples of Europeans misperceiving the Black student as inherently and intellectually inferior fixate on the same connotation and that connotation being "savage" (Fredrickson, 1971). Fredrickson (1971) discussed the use of the word savage and its applications to Blacks, when he discussed Europeans' use of the word to designate Blacks as uncivilized and brutish. He further posited that Europeans misperceived Blacks to be so intrinsically savage that they were subhuman. Various

examples exist of Europeans misperceiving the Black student as a savage. Williams' (1987) *The Destruction of Black Civilization Great Issues of Race from 4500 B. C. to 2000 A. D.*, Rodney's (1982) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, and Fanon's (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth* offer informative readings about Europeans' misperceiving Blacks as savage. Williams, Rodney, and Fanon illustrate Europeans' misperception of the Black student as an inherently and intellectually inferior savage. Together, they communicate a story of African civilizations pre European involvement, Europeans initial excursions into the African continent in search of "slaves," and the psychology used to subjugate Blacks. The three books also share the common theme the Philadelphia Convention, which resulted in the United States Constitution, employed when it declared Blacks to be three-fifths of a human being. I believe Fanon (1963) best articulated each book's theme when he suggested that the self-fulfilling prophecy cycle existed to systematically transform the Black student into a slave.

To address misperceptions' impacts on the Black students' double-consciousness, I highlight the fact that many of the perceptions about Blacks differentiated between Africans living in Africa and Blacks enslaved in America (Fredrickson, 1971). Many of these misperceptions deemed Africans as more savage than enslaved Blacks whose contacts with Europeans had somehow led to docility and a more civilized state. These misperceptions may be the inception of the Black students' double-consciousness; for these misperceptions suggested that Blacks' assimilation and lost African identity bettered the Black student (Fanon, 1963; Rodney, 1982). These misperceptions also suggested that Black students had no African history and identity worth remembering, which left the Black student's history beginning with slavery

(Fanon, 1963; Rodney, 1982). This assault on the Black students' identity may have manifested the Black students' double-consciousness because this assault necessitated that the Black student understand him or her self as civilized or savage, as being a slave or free (Fanon, 1963). The misperceptions also developed the new behaviors required to justify the originally false definition of the Black student as inherently and intellectually inferior.

New behaviors. Merton's (1957) self-fulfilling prophecy definition suggests that, after installing the misperception, many slave society members developed new behaviors designed to bring misperception to reality. Europeans' enslavement of Blacks presents a tale of numerous new behaviors founded upon the misperception of Blacks as inherently and intellectually inferior chattel. For example, Europeans perceived Blacks to be too savage and inherently and intellectually inferior to value family and, as a result, many Europeans destroyed the Black family through selling family members and forbidding Blacks to marry (Fanon, 1963). Furthermore, many Europeans developed new behaviors that rewarded "incompetent, inadequate, imbecilic, and irresponsible [Blacks]" and systematically suppressed "competent, adequate, achieving, aggressive [Blacks]" (Poussaint & Atkinson, 1968, p. 242).

Additionally, many Europeans believed Blacks to be so uncivilized and savage that they could benefit from increased contact with Europeans. In response, many of these Europeans developed behaviors designed to assimilate Blacks, which becomes a politically correct way of saying that many Europeans sought to convert Blacks from savages to still subservient Black skinned Europeans (Fanon, 1952). These assimilationist behaviors included replacing Blacks' names with names associated with

Europeans and forbidding Blacks to speak native African languages and only speak "Standard" English.

Specific to today's special education Black student overrepresentation, many Europeans developed new behaviors. Many of these behaviors remain evident in the educational pedagogy and perceptions, or misperceptions that contribute to today's overrepresentation phenomenon (Patton, 1998). I believe Europeans denying Black students formal education remains a most prominent backdrop in the overrepresentation discourse because of the rationale Europeans used for the unlawful formal education of the Black student. Europeans denied Black students formal education based on four premeditated calculations (Ogbu, 1978). First, many Europeans believed the Black student to be too intellectually inferior to benefit from formal education (Ogbu, 1978). Second, many Europeans believed that educated Blacks became less useful manual laborers (Ogbu, 1978). Third, many Europeans believed educated Blacks posed threats to write "passes" to be used in escapes (Ogbu, 1978). Finally and most telling, many Europeans believed educated Blacks jeopardized its social order and the institution of slavery itself because educated Blacks contradicted the misperception of Blacks' inherent and intellectual inferiority and savagery (Ogbu, 1978). Europeans' denial of formal education to the Black student impacts today's Black student special education overrepresentation through manifesting misperceptions that Patton (1998) believed still bias education's identification, referral, and placement of Black students into special education programs.

To this juncture, it appears that only Europeans developed the new behaviors Merton, in his self-fulfilling prophecy cycle definition, believed accompanied

misperception. I mislead if I continue on this tract, for Blacks too developed new behaviors based on the misperception of their very own inherent and intellectual inferiority. For instance, many Blacks masked their true identities with stupidity, ignorance, and laziness to avoid many arduous tasks associated with their enslavement (Staples, 1973). Many of these Blacks used such masks because they believed that, since Europeans considered them intellectually inferior, then Europeans would believe that they were too stupid, ignorant, and/or lazy to perform certain tasks. The double-consciousness reappears as many Blacks masked their true identities and behaved as perceived by Europeans. In effect, these Blacks, who believed they had outwitted Europeans, began performing behaviors congruent with the misperceptions they believed Europeans held about Blacks. Though this perverted game enabled many Blacks to momentarily abstain from many of the cruelties of their enslavement, many Europeans believed their masks to be their true identities. Subsequently, many Europeans believed Blacks justified the misperception of their very own inherent and intellectual inferiority. As a result, many Europeans accepted misperception as reality.

When misperception becomes reality. Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy cycle concludes when misperception seemingly becomes reality. For those seeking to validate the Black students' inferiority, many potential evidences exist. Some may use the fact that many enslaved Blacks used stupidity and ignorance to avoid work as evidence of the Blacks' inferiority. Some may refer to the fact that the Black student remains America's student most likely to be suspended, expelled, and engage in arguments and fights (Newman et al., 2009; USDOE, 2005) as proof of the Black students' savagery. Some may cite teacher surveys that indicate that American educators regard the Black

student to be most likely to lack high social skills and self-control (Fryer & Torrelli, 2006) as a demonstration of the Black students' inferiority. Others may quote Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) infamous and discredited *Bell Curve* with scientifically validating the Black students' inferiority. Some might argue that the Black students' special education overrepresentation itself, and especially their overrepresentation in special education's most negatively stigmatized MR category (Arnold & Lassman, 2003), reflects their inferiority. Others might use the Black/White achievement gap and the Black students' elevated illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, probation, and incarceration rates to quantify their arguments. Many might use these circumstances to prove that the misperception of the Black students' inferiority has become reality. Yet, to me, these arguments seem misguided and foolish. However, there does exists an argument that captures my attention.

I become enthralled by positions arguing that the Black student accepts and demonstrates his or her inferiority. I become captivated when one speaks of the Black students' language, dress, and/or culture as a demonstration of their inferiority. I become a most fascinated observer when I hear one propose that the Black student expresses his or her inferiority through their usage of the word and apparent identification with the "nigger." Some have argued that, since Europeans developed the word nigger as a derogatory term and identity and since many Black students presently use the word as a term of endearment, the Black students' use of the word demonstrates their acceptance of their very own inferiority (Rogers, 1989). I understand this position and understand how it can be used to justify that misperception has become reality. I also understand, as Rogers (1989) argued, the Black students' use of the word can demonstrate power. The

Black students' use of the word nigger could be perceived as the power to take ownership of something meant to destroy and transform it into a demonstration of perseverance. I understand as well how the Black students' use of the word and identification with the nigger might serve as another residue of their oppression.

Freire (1970), who immersed himself amongst "oppressed" South Americans, produced what I believe stands as a manual of oppression and liberation. During his ethnographic studies, Freire made many revelations that remain pertinent to today's arguments that the Black student acts as an active agent in the misperception of their inferiority becoming reality through accepting and demonstrating their inferiority. His revelations lead me to conclude that the Black students' apparent acceptance and demonstrated inferiority might exist as an artifact of their oppression. In his studies, Freire observed that often an oppressed people perpetuate their own oppression through accepting and personifying "abominable" stereotypes. He further acknowledged that often an oppressed people accept victimization as their identity. Freire also noted that, to maintain their victim identity, many oppressed people often need and seek victimization. Freire detailed the process Diener and Dweck (1978) identified as learned helplessness, which they defined in terms of one attributing the responsibility for his or her condition to an external source. Disempowerment stands as a major consequence of practicing learned helplessness. For, when an individual attributes the responsibility for his or her condition to an external source, he or she no longer exercises power over their very own condition. As a result, the individual experiences a powerlessness (helplessness) that leaves her or him unable to change their condition.

The argument that the Black student serves as an active agent in the misperception of their inferiority becoming reality and eventual disempowerment captures my attention because I believe I understand disempowerment and the disempowerment at the heart of the Black students' special education overrepresentation. When I understand the overrepresentation story as social and intellectual history, I understand disempowerment to be the overwhelming theme. Furthermore, I understand the disempowerment contained in the fact that many of the Black special education student's postschool transition outcomes essentially condemn future Black students to receive special education services. I understand the disempowerment poverty manifests as pejorative perceptions of individuals living in poverty and unequal educational opportunities, and how each contributes to lowered expectations, educational establishment biases, and the Black students' increased special education identification, referral, and placements. I understand the disempowerment created by deficit thinking's treating the Black student as an object for Europeans to save. I understand the disempowerment that created special education's judgmental disability categories and how these categories resegregate American schools. I understand the disempowerment illiteracy creates and how illiteracy disempowers the Black student from producing the academic outcomes needed to deter special education placement. I understand the disempowerment many Black students experience when having a Black educator becomes an exception and not a rule. I understand the disempowerment meeting many Black students as they exit their special education experience. Thus, I understand that, if the Black student actively advances misperceptions about their very own inferiority, they perpetuate their own

disempowerment. I also understand that, if the Black student advances misperceptions about their very own inferiority, the Black student completes the self-fulfilling prophecy cycle Europeans developed to transform the Black student into a slave.

The argument that the Black student demonstrates inferiority, which suggests that they advance misperceptions about their very own inferiority, imprisons my attention because these misperceptions, in many ways, found and perpetuate many of the concerns surrounding the Black students' education, and specifically their special education experience. I find this captivating because, to make this argument, one suggests that the Black student holds some responsibility for their educational circumstance and disempowerment. I find this totally engrossing because most research seems reluctant to enable the Black student to assume any responsibility for his or her educational circumstance and disempowerment. Thereby, this research eliminates the Black students' responsibility for his or her circumstance, contributes to the Black students' learned helplessness, and disempowers the Black student. I am thoroughly mesmerized because addressing many of the concerns associated with the Black students' education, specifically their special education overrepresentation and disempowerment, I believe dictates including and empowering Black students. I am extremely interested in the position that the Black student serves as an active agent in his or her very own inherent and intellectual inferiority because empowerment resides at the heart of my purpose and, through understanding disempowerment; I renew my strength to empower. I renew my strength because at least we are discussing the Black student's responsibility for his or her condition and, in doing so, actually empower Black students by enabling them to be active agents in their very own condition.

Summary. The tale of the Black students' entrance into American history opened with historic firsts, enslavement, and misperception and continued into a system of control designed to keep the Black student subservient. I believe a self-fulfilling prophecy, which may have manifested and preyed upon the Black students' double-consciousness, became the system of control. The self-fulfilling prophecy may have manifested and preyed upon the Black students' double-consciousness through forcing them to determine if they descended from a proud and glorious history, or if their history began with slavery. To do so, the self-fulfilling prophecy began with the misperception of the Black student as inherently and intellectually inferior to Europeans. Next, both Europeans and Blacks developed new behaviors based on this misperception. Finally, the self-fulfilling prophecy concludes as individuals use data to quantify an originally false definition of the Black students intellect. Disempowerment stands as the self-fulfilling prophecy's eventual outcome. This self-fulfilling prophecy cycle might perpetuate today's Black student special overrepresentation through its development of long-lasting misperceptions that then impact identification and referral practices and educational outcomes used for special education placement. Rist (1970) observed a similar self-fulfilling prophecy process, which he entitled an "educational self-fulfilling prophecy."

An Educational Self-fulfilling Prophecy Cycle

It may sound as if I am presenting a conceptual position about a self-fulfilling cycle that has no empirical support. Again, a part of me wishes this to be true. However, Rist's (1970) ethnographic research actually documented a self-fulfilling cycle similar to the one I described. Rist's research empirically validates a self-fulfilling prophecy cycle

filled with Merton's misperception, new behaviors, and the subsequent academic records used to prove that misperception had indeed become reality. I now discuss Rist's research, which began on the first day of school in an urban school where Black students comprised 98% of the student body. In fact, while conducting his research, Rist self-reportedly was the only White person in the school building. Rist, who conducted his research to better understand educator perceptions and possible impacts upon Black students' academic and social outcomes, believed he witnessed "the process whereby expectations [perceptions or misperceptions] and social interactions [new behaviors gave] rise to the social organization [reality] of the class" (p. 412). Rist described a five-stage process that reflects Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy cycle.

Stage one. Rist presented stage one as an introductory period and precursor to the self-fulfilling prophecy's initial misperception. During stage one, Rist noted that educators held "ideal types," or characteristics they believed best-predicted success. Ideal types included physical appearance, student interaction with educators, demonstrated leadership skills, the use of Standard English, and socioeconomic status. Rist's noted that educators derived ideal types from characteristics found in themselves and their social networks. He further acknowledged that the educators' ideal types seemed predicated on their beliefs about success predictors, as defined by American society. Interestingly, Rist found the educators' ideal types relating to social class. Stage one coincides with the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade's initial excursions onto the African continent in search of a human labor force and when Europeans deemed the African well suited for enslavement. Stages one's ideal types also sound eerily familiar to

Washington's (1982) establishment bias and Rosenberg et al.'s (2008) abnormal students.

Stage two. Rist portrayed stage two, as did Merton when Merton described the misperception that installs and fuels the self-fulfilling prophecy cycle. During stage two, Rist documented educators' subjective evaluations, which they based on their ideal types. He observed, as educators identified students they believed personified their ideal types and labeled these students "fast learners." Educators labeled students not fitting their ideal types as "slow learners." For the record, Dunn (1968) believed that such labeling contributed "significantly to feelings of inferiority" (p. 9), and Donovan & Cross (2002) concluded, "students achieve in a manner consistent with the teacher's expectations" (p. 182). Stage two coincides with Europeans' misperceiving and labeling the Black student to be inherently and intellectually inferior and segues into the self-fulfilling prophecy's new behaviors.

Stage three. Rist's third stage relates to the self-fulfilling prophecy's new behaviors and the point when Rist believed the educational self-fulfilling prophecy revealed itself. During this stage, Rist chronicled new behaviors, which included educators and students alike after only eight days of school, providing "differential" treatment to students labeled slow learners. Differential treatments included educators sitting slow learners at tables two and three, which sat farther from the educator's desk and blackboard. Matter of fact, table three students could not even see the blackboard. Differential treatments also included students reinforcing educator perceptions, which Rist documented as a table one student remarking to a table three student, "I smarter than you. I smarter than you" (p. 426). Differential treatments also extended to students

sitting at tables two and three, as Rist reported, “the verbal and physical hostility that the children at tables two and three began to act out amongst themselves in many ways mirrored what the table one students and the teacher were also saying about them” (p. 429). Interestingly, Rist documented that the majority of table two students and every table three student had “matted” or “unprocessed” hair, and “the majority of students at table three had very dark skin” (p. 420). Rist’s stage three coincides with the self-fulfilling prophecy’s new behaviors, which both Europeans and Blacks developed.

Stages four and five. Rist’s fourth and fifth stages correlate with the self-fulfilling prophecy’s misperception becoming reality. Rist described these stages as periods when educator perceptions and labels become realities for many students. He reported that the achievement gap widened between fast and slow learners and that educators employed academic records to validate their initial perceptions and fast and slow learner labels. Stages four and five equate to the self-fulfilling prophecy’s final stage where individuals use statistics to quantify their arguments that the Black student is indeed inferior and prove that misperception has become reality.

Summary. Rist’s research documented Merton’s self-fulfilling prophecy cycle and its applications in a contemporary American educational setting. Rist labeled his observations as an educational self-fulfilling prophecy and believed it contained five stages that essentially equate to Merton’s three-stage self-fulfilling prophecy cycle. Both Rist and Merton identified processes that began with a perception, continued as individuals created new behaviors in response to the perception, and concluded with individuals quantitatively justifying their original perceptions. Rist’s documented educational self-fulfilling prophecy provides an empirical foundation that demonstrates

a self-fulfilling prophecy's power to influence a Black student's educational academic and social outcomes. Now the question remains as to how have others studied this self-fulfilling prophecy cycle.

The Burden of Acting White

Finding research pertaining to what I entitle the self-fulfilling prophecy of Black inferiority can be daunting. The task becomes more challenging when seeking research connecting this self-fulfilling prophecy cycle to special education's Black student overrepresentation. However, careful understanding and cross-referencing lends itself to numerous researchers who allude to the self-fulfilling prophecy of Black inferiority, as they discuss a Black student's oppositional identity and how it impacts the educational and social outcomes that contribute to special education placement and overrepresentation (Bonner, 2000; Comer, 1988; Ford, 1993; Fordham, 1988, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Goff, Martin, & Thomas, 2007; Kauffman, 2001; Ogbu, 1978, 2004). Donovan and Cross (2002), who Reschly believed most comprehensively investigated the Black students' special education overrepresentation (personal communication, February, 13, 2007), identified a Black student's oppositional identity as anti-educational and social behaviors that contribute to academic underachievement, sabotage, and failure, special education placement, and the Black students' special education overrepresentation.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986), leading researchers of a Black students' oppositional identity, suggested that many Black students hold oppositional identities that contribute to the "burden of acting White." They defined the burden of acting White as a Black student's "struggle to achieve [educational] success while retaining

group [Black community] support and approval" (p. 198). Fordham and Ogbu further posited that many Black students devalue their education because they perceive that this education maintains the purpose to replace their Black identity with the White identity they associate with their oppression.

To discuss the burden of acting White's possible contributions to a Black student's education and special education overrepresentation, I first describe the burden of acting White's potential impacts on a Black student's education. Afterwards, I provide context to the burden of acting White to convey the understanding of how and why a Black student might hold an oppositional identity. I provide context by (a) defining the burden of acting White and fictive kinship, (b) presenting Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) and Russell, Wilson, and Hall's (1992) positions about the burden of acting White's origination, and (c) presenting the burden of acting White's controversial existence. Lastly, I present my very own burden of acting White because researchers often describe the burden of acting White's appearance, but seldom describe what it feels like to experience the burden of acting White. In doing so, I hope to facilitate an understanding of how and why a Black student might hold an oppositional identity, experience the burden of acting White, and engage in academic sabotage. I compose this section as a demonstration of the burden of acting White's potential impacts a Black student's education.

The burden of acting White's potential impacts upon a Black student's education. Numerous researchers discuss the burden of acting White's potential impacts on a Black student's education in terms of the academic underachievement, sabotage, and failures associated with in-school and postschool outcomes (Bonner, 2000; Comer,

1988; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Fordham, 1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Kauffman, 2001; Ogbu, 1978, 2004; Whitten, 1992). Most of these researchers seem to direct readers to the phenomenon Bonner (2000) labeled the survival conflict. Bonner's survival conflict entails a Black student's choice between academic achievement and Black community membership. When describing the survival conflict, Bonner detailed the contradictory messages a Black student receives from within the Black community. He highlighted occurrences when Black community members counseled Black students, as many have done throughout history, to use education as a tool to control their condition. Bonner also acknowledged occurrences when Black community members counseled Black students that to be educated was to lose one's Black identity and Black community membership.

Comer (1988) agreed with Bonner and surmised that the survival conflict evolved from the slave society that created and cultivated the misperception of Blacks as inherently and intellectually inferior to Europeans. He believed that the slave society used education as a means of control, which contributed to many Blacks' distrusting the Europeans' educational system and their subsequent oppositional educational identity. Comer also commented on the contradictory messages some Black community members deliver to Black students. He suggested that the Black community included at least two differing factions in regards to a Black student's acquisition of a United States education. One faction appears to believe in education's abilities to empower Black students to change their condition. The other faction seems to believe that history has demonstrated why a Black student should devalue, distrust, and hold an oppositional identity towards the United States educational system.

Together, Bonner and Comer described a survival conflict that included Black students surviving amidst contradictory messages and the ever-preset reality of the revocation of their Black community membership. They both described scenarios that add great pressures to a Black student. Kauffman (2001) believed that many Black students experiencing the burden of acting White's survival conflict, and all which it entails, feel guilty, ambivalent, anxious, and/or depressed, and apprehensive about surpassing the accomplishments of fellow Black community members for fear of appearing too involved in the United States educational system, which could result in the loss of their Black community membership. He further concluded that many of these students employ academic underachievement, sabotage, failure, and/or dropout of school as coping mechanisms.

How and why does a Black student's oppositional educational identity, or burden of acting White, potentially impact their education and special education overrepresentation? The Black student's oppositional educational identity, or burden of acting White, potentially impacts their education and special education overrepresentation in at least three ways. First, Donovan and Cross's (2002) *Minority SSGE,* which explored numerous issues surrounding the Black students' special education overrepresentation, identified a Black student's oppositional identity, or burden of acting White, as a major perpetuator of the Black students' special education overrepresentation. They conclude that the eventual academic underachievement, sabotage, failure, and increased dropout rates each present the perception a Black student needs special education services in special education's judgmental disability categories. Second, the burden of acting White contains a survival conflict that leads

many Black students to engage in academic sabotage and produce many of the circumstances needed for special education identification, referral, and placement. Lastly, and seemingly unattended, the burden of acting White forces many Black students to decide about his or her identity. Here, once again, the Black students' double-consciousness reappears in the form of determining if being educated means being for or against the Black community and their Black community membership. As a result, many Black students' educational outcomes deteriorate and perpetuate special education identification, referral, placement, and overrepresentation.

The burden of acting White and fictive kinship. To truly express how and why a Black student might hold an oppositional identity and burden of acting White requires context. Contextualizing a Black student's burden of acting White begins with understanding fictive kinship. Fordham and Ogbu (1986), who defined fictive kinship from an anthropological perspective, considered it to be "a kinshiplike relationship between persons not related by blood or marriage in a society, but who have some reciprocal social or economic relationship" (p. 183). They acknowledge that the Black community solely identifies members and membership qualities, do not always base membership status on Africanized features or blood, and will bestow and revoke membership at any time regardless of social status. Thereby, fictive kinship leaves a Black student with the ever-present risk of having her or his Black community membership revoked for begin perceived to be too heavily engaged in the United States educational system. The question now remains as to why or how some Black community members came to regard a United States education as grounds for having one's Black community membership revoked. Fordham and Ogbu addressed this inquiry

and believed that history provided ample opportunities to understand why or how many Black community members dissuade a Black student's engagement in the United States educational system.

Understanding why or how a Black community might regard a United States education as grounds for Black community membership revocation necessitates that one understand how the Untied States used education as a control. Remember, the slave society denied Black students a formal education as a system of control. Fordham (1988) believed that many Black community members understood the United States application of education as a system of control and perceived the United States educational system as an agent of the "dominant society." She further posited that, with this perception, many Blacks devalued and distrusted the United States educational system and equated United States academic success akin to "selling out," or becoming "raceless." Being raceless, Fordham defined racelessness as occurring when a Black community member denies his or her relationship with the Black community to gain upward social mobility and adhere to the United States educational system's unwritten institutionalized mandate: "become *un-black*" [italics added for emphasis] (p. 58). In essence, many Black community members associate a United States education with their enslavement and oppression. As a result, many deemed United States academic success as grounds for having one's membership revoked.

To convey a more thorough understanding of why or how some Black community members came to regard a United States education as grounds for membership revocation, I present Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) and Russell, Wilson, and Hall's (1992) positions about the burden of acting White's origination. Together these

researchers believed that United States history holds the answer as to why or how some Black community members regard a United States education as grounds for revoking one's Black community membership. These researchers, though slightly differing in their positions, each described an origin with identity at its essence. They also describe origins that depict Black identity and a United States education standing in direct opposition.

The burden of acting White according to Fordham and Ogbu (1986).

> The [burden of acting White is] a part of a cultural orientation toward schooling which exists within the minority community and which evolved during many generations when White Americans insisted that minorities were incapable of academic success, denied them the opportunity to succeed academically, and did not reward them adequately when they succeeded (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 183).

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) believed that the burden of acting White originated when Blacks first arrived on American soil enslaved as involuntary minorities. Being an involuntary minority meant that enslaved Africans arrived in America, without consent, to be permanent members. Ogbu (1978, 2004) theorized, with which Fordham (1988) agreed, that the burden of acting White evolved from enslaved Blacks who developed their collective identity in opposition to the slave society they believed deemed them inherently and intellectually inferior. Essentially, Fordham and Ogbu believed that the burden of acting White originated from the Black community's search for an identity. I now discuss collective identity and the four identity problems Ogbu (2004) believed facilitated, or necessitated, the Black community's oppositional identity development.

Collective identity. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) defined the Black community's collective identity as, "a sense of peoplehood in opposition to the social identity of White Americans because of the way White Americans treat [Blacks] in economic, political, social, and psychological domains" (p. 181). Ogbu (2004) expounded upon this definition to include Black "people's sense of who they are" (p. 3). He explained that the Black community's collective identity manifested from four identity problems, originating from Blacks arrival in the United States enslaved and relegated to chattel status. Ogbu distinguished the four identity problems as (a) involuntary minority status, (b) discrimination, (c) social subordination, and (d) expressive mistreatments.

Four identity problems. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) described *subordinate or involuntary minority status* in terms of people being included involuntarily and permanently included into a society by colonization, conquest, or enslavement. The significance being that enslaved Blacks did not freely enter United States society. In contrast, Ogbu (2004) described voluntary minorities as minorities only numerically and immigrant minorities as individuals who came to the United States by choice in the search of economic, political, and/or social status. Ogbu (2004) described *discrimination* in terms of the United States denying Blacks, as a group, equal access to employment, housing, and basic human rights. He further discussed the slave society's forbidding Blacks to engage in practices considered European privilege such as marrying, owning property, and traveling freely as examples of discrimination. Ogbu (2004) identified *social segregation* as the social subordination that resulted in segregated housing and public facilities, interracial dating, and the hostility, violence, and forced assimilation resulting in marginalization. Ogbu (2004) discussed *expressive mistreatments* in terms

of the United States negatively stigmatizing Blacks' food, music, clothing, language, culture, and intellect. He posited that Whites needed to denigrate Blacks in order to "feel good [and] think that they [were] more intelligent than Blacks (p. 7).

The United States' expressive mistreatment of Blacks holds a key to understanding the Black community's oppositional identity. Expressive mistreatment meant that the United States applied subordinate or involuntary minority status, discrimination, and social segregation indiscriminately to the Black community as a whole. The United States did not view, nor treat, the Black community as a collection of individuals, but rather as a collective unit. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) provided Nat Turner, an enslaved Black community member, who in 1831 led a rebellion that resulted in 57 dead White men, women, and children, as an example of the United States' expressive mistreatment of Blacks. In response to Nat Turner's rebellion, the United States restricted the travel of and communication between free and enslaved Blacks. This expressive mistreatment demonstrated to Blacks and Whites that the actions of one Black community member would bring consequences upon the entire group, as they were a group and not a collection of individuals (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). In response to the United States' expressive mistreatments, the Black community coalesced and developed an oppositional identity that opposed the subordinate minority status the United States provided.

Fordham and Ogbu cited numerous researchers while describing the "conflicts and oppositional processes between minority groups and dominant groups . . . [that] often cause the minorities to form oppositional social identities and oppositional cultural frames of reference" (p. 181). They continued to describe the Black community's

cultural frame of reference to include the mechanisms used to protect their identities from Whites. As a result, Blacks regard "White" behaviors, activities, events, symbols and meanings as dangerous to their identities. At the same time, they consider other behaviors, activities, events, symbols and meanings as appropriate to their cultural frame of reference because they "are not a part of White Americans' way of life" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 181).

Many Blacks came to regard a United States education as a White American's way of life for two specific reasons, according to Fordham and Ogbu (1986). First, many Black community members regarded the United States educational system as a control and a process of learning to be White and not Black. Thus, many "automatically or unconsciously perceive learning some aspects of the [White] culture of their oppressors as harmful to their identity" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 182). Thus, learning itself becomes a conflict between saving or losing one's Black identity. Second, learning in an American educational system becomes a conflict or White American way of life because many Blacks perceive it as a White American prerogative where "performance is judged by Whites or their representatives, and where rewards for performance are determined by White people according to White criteria" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 182). Fordham and Ogbu believed the burden of acting White manifested from the Black community's oppositional identity because many Black community members deemed Black community members engaged in "White" behaviors to not personify the Black community's oppositional identity, distrusted these individuals, and associated them with the slave society they associated with their circumstance. As a result, many

Black community members revoked these individuals Black community membership, and the burden of acting White was born.

The burden of acting White according to Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992). Russell, Wilson, and Hall's (1992) *The Color Complex* provides another understanding of the burden of acting White's origination. They explained that the burden of Acting White evolved from internal Black community conflicts. They presented the slave society's relative preference for the European blood coursing through veins of lighter skinned Blacks and distaste for its absence in darker skinned Blacks as a circumstance that contributed to the Black community's internal confliction. The slave society's preference for lighter skinned Blacks translated to more lightly skinned Blacks receiving added benefits, such as working in the masters' home as "house slaves." Working within the masters' home increased house slaves' exposure to the masters' foods, books, education, language, cultural and religious beliefs, and other commodities that contributed to their quicker acquisition of the masters' culture and acceptance. Darker skinned Blacks typically worked in fields as "field slaves" and had relatively less contact with the masters, which slowed their acquisition of the masters' culture and acceptance.

Russell et al. presented various conflicts, such as house slaves' newfound Christianity, which Ogbu (2004) believed the masters' provided as a means of control, to demonstrate the burden of acting White's origination from within the Black community. They discussed the house slaves' extended contact with the masters' Standard English, and as with the evolution of any language (Baugh, 1983; Smitherman, 1977), Russell et al. explained how house slaves melded their language with the

Standard English to develop a pidgin, or contact language spoken between house slave and master. As a result, house slaves spoke distinctly different from field slaves who had a less developed pidgin due to infrequent contacts with the Standard English. Field slaves reacted adversely to house slaves' pidgin because they perceived it to sound like the masters, whom field slaves associated with their enslavement.

Russell et al. also discussed Blacks who "passed." Passing consisted of Blacks, with skin light enough that Whites would accept them as White, actually living as White people. Passing Blacks found many benefits, which included land ownership, traveling freely, and formal education. Russell et al. believed that these benefits led many light skinned Blacks to pass as White and forgo their relationship with the Black community. They also believed that many of these passing Blacks mistreated darker skinned Blacks, as did the masters.

Together these internal Black community conflicts, as well as others, Russell et al. believed illuminate the diverging identities, primarily based on skin color, that differentiated Black community members' social status and subsequent treatments and mistreatments. They also believed that conflicts of this nature reflect a condition in which many Black community members began defining Black community membership based on one's identification with other Black community members and the Black community's condition. In the process of defining Black community membership, many Black community members began defining "Whiteness" based on one's identification with America's slave society. This circumstance, Russell et al. believed equated to the burden of acting White. Russell et al. suggested that the burden of acting White originated the instance a Black community member revoked another Black community

member's Black community membership because she or he deemed the individual to act like the masters, which is to say act White.

The burden of acting White's controversial existence. As most disproportional representation discussions stem from Dunn's (1968) writings, most burden of acting White discussions evolve from Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) research. Though Fordham and Ogbu's research remains seminal to burden of acting White discussions, it also remains quite divisive. It appears that their assertion that a "major reason Black students do poorly in school is that they experience inordinate ambivalence and affective dissonance in regard to academic efforts and success" (p. 177) evokes the most consternation. Fordham and Ogbu defined affective dissonance as the internal stress that results from Blacks' crossing cultural boundaries while believing they are joining the "enemy" and "betraying their group and their cause" (p. 182). This belief contributes to the many contradictory studies that have examined the burden of acting White's existence. I shall now explore a representative sample of the research surrounding the burden of acting White's existence. To do so, I first review Fordham and Ogbu's research. I next explore three research studies that used nationally representative samples to explore the burden of acting White's existence. Finally, I present the phenomenology Goff, Martin, and Thomas (2007) used to determine the burden of acting White's existence.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986). Fordham and Ogbu conducted ethnographic research while believing that the burden of acting White existed. As a result, they designed their research to better understand the coping mechanisms academically underachieving and achieving Black students employed to navigate the burden of acting

White. Fordham and Ogbu defined coping mechanisms used to circumvent the burden of acting White as:

> the various strategies that Black students at Capital High use to resolve, successfully or unsuccessfully, the tension between students desiring to do well academically and meet the expectations of school authorities on the one hand and the demand of peers for conformity to group-sanctioned attitudes and behaviors that validate Black identity. (p. 186)

In the process of studying coping mechanisms, Fordham and Ogbu developed their burden of acting White hypothesis and concluded the burden of acting White to be the product of, and perpetuated by, Black students' unwillingness or inability "*to control* [their lives] and act in opposition to the forces [they identify] as detrimental to [their] academic progress " [italics added for emphasis] (p. 187).

To better understand these coping mechanisms, Fordham and Ogbu conducted their research at "Capital High," which sat in a low-income Washington D. C. community where Black students comprised 99% of the student body. Their research, conducted for more than a year, involved intense observations of 33 eleventh grade Black students. Fordham and Ogbu distinguished students as either academic underachievers or achievers, and, after completing research activities, believed they better understood the coping mechanisms used by academic underachievers and achievers and how these mechanisms impacted their educational outcomes. I now present Fordham and Ogbu's academic underachievers and academic achievers to demonstrate the coping mechanisms employed by these students to navigate the burden of acting White and how these mechanisms impacted their educational outcomes.

Before, I must acknowledge that Capital High students deemed a fellow student to act White if they (a) spoke Standard English, (b) listened to "White" music or classical music, (c) attended an opera, ballet, or symphony, (d) studied in the library, (e) worked "hard" to earn "good" grades, (f) with to a Smithsonian museum, (g) did volunteer work, (h) went camping or hiking, (i) attended a cocktail party or a party with no music, (k) arrived on time, or (l) read or wrote poetry.

Academic Underachievers. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) distinguished an academically underachieving Black student as one who possessed the necessary capacities to academically achieve though the student demonstrated little, if any, academic success, which sounds eerily similar to the LD definition. They hypothesized that these students purposefully academically underachieved in response to conscious or unconscious decisions to avoid acting White. After conducting their research, Fordham and Ogbu concluded that the evidence suggested that their study's academically underachieving students adopted coping mechanism to navigate the burden of acting White. They presented four students they believed comprised a representative sample of the avoidance and camouflage academically underachieving Capital High students used to cope with the burden of acting White.

Fordham and Ogbu described Sidney as a Black male athlete with Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), and composite reading and math scores demonstrating his capacities to outperform many Capital High "high" academically achieving students. Sidney, at the time, enrolled in mostly advanced placement (AP) courses, held a C Grade Point Average (GPA), though he admitted he could do much better. When discussing his academic records and GPA,

Sidney spoke of fear. He discussed his fear of fellow Capital High students labeling him as a "brainiac." He then articulated how Capital High students used the label brainiac to refer to students perceived to act White. Sidney also said his teammates called him "Mr. advanced placement," and that he was not proud of his academic record or GPA.

Through Fordham and Ogbu's exploration of the mechanisms Sidney used to cope with the burden of acting White, they found avoidance. Sidney's fear of being an outcaste led him to concentrate on playing football and his burgeoning manhood, which he believed enabled him to take AP courses and maintain some semblance of popularity, or as he said, "they don't call me a brainiac because I'm an athlete" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 188). Sidney acknowledge his need and capacities "to earn good grades in school in order to take advantage of the few opportunities he thinks are available to Black Americans" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 187), yet did not study and committed little time to homework, which equated to 15 minutes while eating breakfast. Fordham and Ogbu believed Sidney's limited studying, not completing homework, and athletic concentration reflected the avoidance behaviors he used to cope with the burden of acting White.

Fordham and Ogbu next presented Max as another male who employed avoidance as a coping mechanism to navigate the burden of acting White. They presented Max as an athlete enrolled in AP courses at his parents' request. Fordham and Ogbu described Max in terms of his "tenacity . . . [and] desire to remain encapsulated in peer-group relations and norms, [which remained] quite contrary to his mother's constant effort to 'liberate' him from that encapsulation" (p. 189). They then acknowledged that Max considered his "friends" as so central to his identity that he tried to please them through

his behaviors. When interviewed about the coping mechanisms he used to navigate the burden of acting White, Max said he put "brakes" on his academic efforts and achievements, or engaged in purposeful academic underachievement. The brakes, or "limiting his academic effort and performance" (p. 189), Max believed became so much of his social identity that he claimed it as his split personality, which sounds eerily similar to a Black student's double-consciousness. Fordham and Ogbu identified Max's social identity as the avoidance he used to cope with the burden of acting White.

Fordham and Ogbu presented Shelvy and descried her as scoring the highest possible overall grade equivalent on standardized tests, which matched her teachers' expectations. Until attending Capital High, Shelvy demonstrated the academic successes necessary to have her, as a freshman, placed in the honors section. However, at Capital High, she admitted her lost academic enthusiasm and that she made no "concerted effort to improve the level of her performance" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 190). Though Fordham and Ogbu initially did not categorize the exact function of Shelvy's Capital High behaviors, they believed she described her coping strategy when she said, "most brainiacs . . . sit back and they know an answer, and they won't answer it" (p. 191). Fordham and Ogbu then concluded that Shelvy used camouflage, or masking her academic abilities, to navigate the burden of acting White. They further fortified their position when they discussed these same camouflaging behaviors she used in elementary school when she first heard the term brainiac and apparently understood, as she said, "ideally everybody wants to be a brainiac, but one is paralyzed with fear that if he or she performs well in school he or she will be discovered, and that would bring some added responsibilities and problems (p. 190).

Lastly, Fordham and Ogbu presented Kaela as an example of an underachieving Capital High female student who also employed a coping mechanism to navigate the burden of acting White. Kaela, who did not take the PSAT or CTBS, received a perfect score on the Life Skills Examination. Kaela's teachers remarked that she was more capable than most of their students, though she failed nearly all her core courses. It seems that absenteeism proved the extenuating circumstance that contributed to Kaela's Capital High academic failures, which contrasts her earlier academic career. Before coming to Capital High, teachers considered Kaela a "good student" and high achiever. In fact, her academic achievement led to a full scholarship to attend a Catholic elementary and junior high school. Fordham and Ogbu believed that Kaela began coping with the burden of acting White when she began developing the collective identity that adversely reacted to parochial school administrators treating her differently from other Black students because they considered her "special." Interestingly, Kaela said she believed her Black skin and economic status limited her future opportunities and, as a result, she put brakes on her educational efforts. Fordham and Ogbu believed that Kaela used absenteeism, or avoidance, to navigate the burden of acting White, which she developed in response to her oppositional collective Black community identity.

Academic Achievers. Fordham and Ogbu described academically achieving Capital High students to be academically successful relative to other Capital High students. They also posited that these academically achieving students dealt with the burden of acting White by deciding to pursue academic achievement in spite of internal and external pressures. Fordham and Ogbu believed these academically achieving

students adopted camouflage as the coping mechanism they used to navigate the burden of acting White. I discuss three students they believed comprised a representative sample of the camouflage academically achieving Capital High students used to cope with the burden of acting White.

Fordham and Ogbu first presented Martin as an academically achieving Capital High male who used camouflage to cope with the burden of acting White. Martin first experienced the burden of acting White in junior high school when fellow students labeled him a brainiac because he made all A's and B's. Fordham and Ogbu described Martin as one who completes most of his homework, but does not engage in unofficial required academic tasks. They also described him to be very conscious of the burden of acting White's underlying message to Capital High academically achieving Black males, which he articulated to be a question of one's manhood. Martin further articulated that the best coping strategy for a Capital High academically achieving Black male resided in a "cloak" used to disguise their academic abilities. Fordham and Ogbu believed that Martin's cloak became the camouflage, or mask, he used to navigate the burden of acting White. They used Martin's own words when he said, "if you be all about your schoolwork . . . [and] if you don't act like a clown, your friends gonna start calling you a brainiac" (p. 194) to cement their conclusion.

Fordham and Ogbu next presented Norris, whom they described as a Capital High academically achieving male student who had experienced the burden of acting White since elementary school. They further described Norris in terms of standardized test scores where he scored at the college level, the exemplary academic record he maintained since elementary school that earned him Valedictorian and "most likely to

succeed" honors, and his straight A's since arriving at Capital High. Fordham and Ogbu employed Norris' own words when he said, "I had to act crazy . . . Only the people who knew me knew my crazy side, when they found out I was smart, they wouldn't believe it. And the people that knew that I was smart, wouldn't believe it if they were told that I was crazy. So I went through that. I'm still like that now, though" (p. 196). Fordham and Ogbu identified Norris's clown mask as the camouflage (coping mechanism) he used to maintain academic excellence, keep fellow students form bullying him, and thereby navigate with the burden of acting White. Norris' self-described mask became a double-consciousness.

Fordham and Ogbu presented Katrina as a high achieving (all A's) Black female student. On her PSAT, CTBS, Life Skills assessment, she scored 100% in all nine categories, and her GPA revealed her to be one of the study's highest academic achievers. Katrina admitted that fellow students had called her a brainiac throughout her school career. She also admitted that she understood the term to mean acting White, which if she denies the label "blows her cover" and often leads to ridicule, alienation, or physical harm. More than just denying the label, Katrina admitted to putting brakes on her educational efforts, or as she put it, "I'd hold back" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 197). She also admitted her fear of being told she acted White, which is why she went "underground" and did not participate in academic activities, such as Capital High's "It's Academic" club, though she completed the assessment to join the club and scored in the top three of all students administered the assessment.

Summary. Fordham and Ogbu's research remains central to burden of acting White discussions. In their research, they sought to better understand the

coping mechanisms Capital High Black students use to navigate the burden of acting White. They studied both underachieving and achieving Black students to find that the both groups employed avoidance, camouflage, and/or academic underachievement to limit their educational accomplishments and limit the appearance that they acted White. Columbus (2006) distinguished avoidance and camouflage behaviors similar to Fordham and Ogbu's underachieving students as performance-avoidance goals. He acknowledged that these behaviors might reflect "maladaptive patterns of learning" (p. 33) and indicated that these behaviors remain indicative of a Black student's attempts to avoid demonstrating incompetence. The incompetence becomes the perception that the Black student acts White. Noteworthy, Fordham and Ogbu asserted that many Black students do not experience the burden of acting White based on external pressures. They found that many Black students experience a self-imposed burden of acting White because they perceive themselves to act White. In sum, though some Capital High students experiencing the burden of acting White demonstrated academic achievement, they did so as did underachieving students, which meant that both groups constantly battled to establish and maintain an identity and, as Fordham and Ogbu articulated, to control their lives.

Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998). Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) conducted what they considered the first nationally representative and rigorous examination of the burden of acting White's existence. They focused on Fordham and Ogbu's oppositional culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1978, 1991, 2004), though

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) focused on oppositional identity. Nevertheless, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey used student self-reports to determine whether four hypotheses contained within Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting White hypothesis remained consistent across a national sample. Essentially, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey sought to determine if the burden of acting White truly existed by examining its prerequisites. They used National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) data, which the National Center for Educational assembled in 1990. Their sample included 2,197 Black students, 653 Asian American students, and 13,942 White non-Hispanic students. They chose this sample because they believed it reflected the United States immigrants (groups coming to the United States on their own volition), involuntary minorities (groups coming to the United States via enslavement), and "dominant" group (Whites). I now explore the four hypotheses Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey examined.

Hypothesis one. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey first sought to determine if "involuntary minorities [Blacks] students perceive fewer returns to education and more limited occupational opportunities than do dominant [White] students or immigrant minority [Asian American] students" (p. 537). To examine this hypothesis, they asked students to choose between two options (strongly agree or strongly disagree) while answering various questions. Most important, they asked students to report whether education was important to their future employment. Their results indicated Black students to be significantly more likely than White students to report education as being important to their future employment.

Hypothesis two. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey's addressed, "involuntary minority students [exhibiting] greater resistance to school than dominant students or

immigrant minority students" (p. 540). They said this was important because Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) proposed cultural disconnects between Blacks and the Unites States educational culture, which includes its educators. To address this hypothesis, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey examined students' skills, habits, styles, and concrete attitudes. Mickelson (1990) defined concrete attitudes as students' attitudes towards specific daily events, which includes a student's attitudes towards educators and their reactions to perceived educator perceptions. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey's examined (a) educators' assessment of students' effort and disruptiveness, (b) student self-reports of being in trouble, and (c) student self-reports of hours spent completing homework. To measure concrete attitudes, Ainsworth Darnell and Downey measured students' self-reports of (a) educators' treatment towards students, (b) the fairness of disciplinary actions, (c) if students were doing what they should be doing in school, (d) the appropriateness of rule breaking, and (e) if students believed other students found them to be a "good" student or a troublemaker.

Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey's hypothesis two examination returned mixed results. They found educators reporting Black students to demonstrate less academic effort and more disruptive behaviors and Black students self-reportedly doing less homework and being in more trouble. These findings they concluded to be consistent with Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) conclusions. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey's examination of students' skills, habits, styles, and concrete behaviors highlighted Black students self-reporting (a) more positive attitudes towards education, (b) "good" treatment from educators, (c) being less likely to report it being appropriate to break rules, (d) more likely to report being satisfied from doing what they were supposed to

do, (e) more likely to report being perceived as a good student and not a troublemaker, and (f) significantly more likely than White students to report that it was important to try hard in school. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey considered these findings counter to Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) positions.

Hypothesis three. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey identified the third hypothesis as, "high achieving involuntary minority students [being] negatively sanctioned by their peers for their achievement" (p. 542). They acknowledged that, although Black students on most academic measures perform lower than White students, not all Black students fail to achieve. They then presented Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White and discussed psychological pressures experienced by many high achieving Black students. Their examination of this third hypothesis entailed determining if the pressures experienced by Black academically achieving students were any more prevalent than those experienced by high achieving White or Asian American students. To address this research question, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey examined if high achieving Black students experienced less popularity than high achieving Whites or Asian American students by asking students whether other students considered them popular, socially active, or part of the leading crowd. They did not operationalize these terms nor explain the terms operationalization to students. Still, they reported Black students to be more likely to report being good, very good, and among the "most popular" students. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey also reported that, "relative to White students . . . [Black] students are especially popular when they are also seen as very good students" (p. 545). Similarly, they reported that Black students' friendship networks placed more value on studying, good grades, and high school graduation than did White students.

They concluded these findings to contradict Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting White.

Hypothesis four. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey identified the fourth hypothesis as, "resistance to school [accounting] for the racial gap in school performance between involuntary students and dominant students and immigrant minority students" (p. 545). Essentially, they sought to systematically determine if Fordham and Ogbu's oppositional culture, not identity, explained the achievement gap between Black and White students and Black and Asian American students. The methodology of this process seemed indistinguishable. They said they predicted students' overall grades in math, English, history, and science then introduced "measures of opposition" such as skills, habits, styles, and concrete attitudes as intervening variables. They found the achievement gap between Black and White students and Black and Asian American students to be prevalent until they introduced measures of opposition. Once they introduced these measures, they found the achievement gaps between Blacks and Whites and Black and Asian American students to be of no significance. They concluded that this reduction occurred due in large part to Black students having more pro-academic attitudes than Whites or Asian American students. They also concluded Black students to be statistically equal to White students once they controlled for attitudes. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey furthered suggested that, without Black students high positive academic attitudes, the Black/White achievement gap would be even greater. They considered these finding to counter Fordham & Ogbu's burden of acting White.

Summary. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey's nationally representative research seemed determined to discredit Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) research and, at first glance, it appears their findings successfully contradict the prerequisites underlying Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White. However, their research and findings include caveats. First, while challenging Fordham and Ogbu, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey quoted Ogbu (1991) as saying,

> one learns what [B]lacks believe about how they get ahead in America not necessarily by asking the direct question about getting ahead; direct questions will generally elicit responses similar to those given by [W]hite Americans. A more useful approach is to observe what they do in o order to get ahead (p. 444).

Yet, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey's research centered on student self-reports, which employed questions designed to do just the opposite of Ogbu's (1991) advice. Fryer and Torelli (2006) referred to this practice as "classic" measurement error, and further iterated doubts to whether any individual would report "damaging" information, such as negative academic attitudes, unpopularity, etc. Second, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey consistently used terms such as "good" without demonstrating the terms operationalization. Without demonstrating how they operationalized terms or how students understood the terms, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey introduced doubt into their examination. Lastly, and maybe more to the point, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey critiqued Fordham and Ogbu's oppositional culture, while Fordham and Ogbu focused more on oppositional identity, which may have influenced their findings because they did not study Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting White.

Cook and Ludwig (1998). Cook and Ludwig (1998) believed that many Black students "disparage [Black] high achievers for acting White" and White students "disparage high achievers for being nerds" (p. 380). This belief led Cook and Ludwig to question whether Black students were any more oppositional to the United States educational system than non-Hispanic White students. They designed their empirical research, using a nationally representative sample, to determine if high academically achieving Black students experienced alienation or ostracism at greater rates than non-Hispanic White high academically achieving students, and to better understand the social costs associated with academic success for both Black and non-Hispanic White students. They referred to Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) Capital High study conducted at an "almost entirely Black school" to suggest that much of what is known about the burden of acting White may not actually represent United States students, because they believed Capital High's demographics did not reflect United States society.

To address their two research questions, Cook and Ludwig used National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) follow-up data to gather a sample of 17,544 students without IEPs. They indicated that this sample, "with appropriate weights," constituted a representative sample of all United States tenth graders. The majority of Cook and Ludwig's data resulted from students' dropout rates, absences, and student questionnaires, albeit they admitted that Black and non-Hispanic White students overestimate their GPAs. To measure students' alienation, they examined students' educational expectations, dropout rates, effort, and parental involvement because they believed if a student experienced the burden of acting White, the burden would manifest itself in one or more of these domains. I now present Cook and Ludwig's findings in

relation to (a) educational expectations, (b) dropout rates, (c) effort, and (d) parental involvement. I conclude by exploring their examination of the social costs of academic achievement for both Black and non-Hispanic White students.

Educational expectations. Cook and Ludwig predicted that, for Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting White to be a reality, Black students would express lowered educational expectations for such things as high school graduation and postsecondary attendance and graduation. To examine if this were true, Cook and Ludwig employed student self-reports to determine differences between Black and non-Hispanic White students' reported expectations to graduate from high school, attend postsecondary education, and earn a college degree. They hypothesized that Black students expected to stay in school longer than non-Hispanic White students, though their findings revealed essentially no difference between Black (16%) and non-Hispanic White (16%) students. Similarly, they reported that 9% of their sample's non-Hispanic White students expected to graduate from high school, while 11% of their Black students reported expecting to graduate from high school. As far as expectations for postsecondary attendance, approximately 31% of their sample's Black students and 30% of their sample's non-Hispanic White students reported expecting to attend a postsecondary educational institution, which indicated essentially no difference between the two groups. The only measures non-Hispanic White students (61%) reported expecting to do more than Black students (58%) was graduate from college and attend graduate school. Cook and Ludwig did not believe their results supported Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White.

Dropout rates. Cook and Ludwig suggested that, if Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White truly existed, then Black students' would express higher expectations for dropping out of school. To address this position, Cook and Ludwig used NELS (1990) data that asked students to self-report if they expected to graduate from high school. As can be expected, "almost all" students reported expecting to graduate from high school. In 1992, the NELS revisited school records and found approximately 7% of non-Hispanic White students and approximately 10% of Black students from the original sample had dropped out of school. Cook and Ludwig surmised that this difference disappeared when controlling for family background. They also included that when controlling for socioeconomics, Black students remained in school longer than non-Hispanic White students. Thereby, Cook and Ludwig concluded that their results did not support the existence of Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White.

Effort. Cook and Ludwig considered effort to involve skipping class or missing school, hours spent doing homework, and participating in science or math fairs, honors society, or winning an academic award. They hypothesized that, according to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Black students oppositional identity would manifest itself in increased class skipping, absences, decreased hours spent doing homework and participation in science and math fairs, honors society, and/or winning academic awards. Once Cook and Ludwig examined NELS data and compared it with student academic records, they found that about 35% of both Black and non-Hispanic White students admitted to skipping class at least once. They also found non-Hispanic White students to miss more school days than Black students. As far as hours spent completing homework, Cook and Ludwig included that, according to NELS data, fewer Black students (65%) reported

spending 2-3 hours on homework than non-Hispanic White students (68%). They also reported that, on average, non-Hispanic White students reported spending 1 to 1.5 more hours completing homework. Cook and Ludwig reported Black students to be 5% more likely to participate in science or math fairs, and win academic awards than non-Hispanic White students. Contrary to popular belief (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Ford, 1998), Cook and Ludwig reported Black students to be as likely as non-Hispanic White students to be in honors classes. When interpreting these findings, Cook and Ludwig reported that they contradicted the existence of Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White.

Parental involvement. Cook and Ludwig believed that decreased parental involvement would result from Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White. Thus, they sought to determine if Black parents were less involved in their child's education than the parents of non-Hispanic White students. To do so, they used students' self-reports of parents calling their school or attending a school meeting or function as parental involvement, without specifying the nature of the telephone calls, meetings, or functions. Still, they commented that 65% of their Black students reported that their parents had telephoned their teacher at least, while 58% of non-Hispanic White students reported that their parents had telephoned their teacher at least. At 65%, Black students reported greater rates of parents attending school meetings or functions than non-Hispanic White students, of which 56% reported that their parents had attended a school meeting or function. In Cook and Ludwig's analysis, student reports of parents' checking their child's homework also constituted parental involvement. They found 63% of their sample's Black students reporting that their parents checked their

homework and 62% of non-Hispanic White students reporting the same. Together, Cook and Ludwig used these three student self-reports to suggest Black students to be 4% more likely to receive parental involvement, which they believed contradicted the existence of Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White.

The social costs of academic achievement. Cook and Ludwig believed that Black students would experience decreased social costs, or social standing and popularity, as their academic achievement (getting mostly A's in mathematics and holding honors society membership) increased according to Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White. They used NELS data to determine if Black students were more likely to experience decreased social standing and popularity as their academic achievement increased as opposed to non-Hispanic White students. Before presenting their data, Cook and Ludwig compared Black and non-Hispanic White students' self-reports about their social standing. Cook and Ludwig utilized NELS questionnaires that asked students to report whether they (a) experienced put downs form classmates, (b) believed they were popular and popular to opposite sex students, and (c) believed they were a member of their school's "leading crowd." Cook and Ludwig found Black students (22%) reporting being put down more from classmates than non-Hispanic White students (20%). They also found that, at approximately 16%, both Black and non-Hispanic White students similarly reported being "not at all" popular, and at 33% both Black and non-Hispanic White students reported "not at all" being a part of the leading crowd. By approximately 6% (27% to 21% respectively), Black students reported being more likely to be very popular with the opposite sex.

In regards to the social costs of academic achievement, Cook and Ludwig compared unpopular high academic achievers to non-high academically achieving unpopular students. They calculated social costs by using the number of unpopular high achieving students as the numerator and the number of non-high achieving unpopular students as the denominator. Their findings, they believed opposed Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting White because they found Black high achieving students to be "slightly" more popular than Black students earning B' and C's. Cook and Ludwig concluded, "the social benefits of academic success are generally greater for Blacks than for Whites" (p. 390). However, when looking at their tabled demonstration of their findings, Black students with mostly A's attending predominantly White schools, self-reported the highest rates of unpopularity, which may indicate that these students were indeed experiencing the burden of acting White.

Summary. Cook and Ludwig's nationally representative study examined whether Black students truly were anymore oppositional to their United States education than non-Hispanic White students. They reviewed NELS data and compared them with academic records to examine Black and non-Hispanic White students' educational expectations, dropout rates, effort, and parental involvement. They chose these variables because they believed that Black students experiencing Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting White would demonstrate enough variance form non-Hispanic White students to empirically substantiate or invalidate Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White. Overall, Cook and Ludwig concluded that both Black and non-Hispanic White academically achieving students experienced increased unpopularity. Thereby, Cook

and Ludwig did not believe their examination supported Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White.

Fryer and Torelli (2006). Fryer and Torelli (2006) examined the burden of acting White's existence through investigating if "racial differences in the relationship between social status and achievement exist, as such differences feed into student's investment decisions regarding human capital and social affiliations" (p. 8). Essentially, they sought to better understand if Black students experienced Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting White as evidenced in Black academically achieving students decreased friendships. Fryer and Torelli employed National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Addhealth) data, which included follow-along analysis (data collected in 1995, 1996, and 2002) of 90,118 seventh through 12th grade students, representing 175 schools from 80 different United States communities. The Addhealth database used stratified random sampling to recruit another sample, in which they conducted home interviews of 20,745 students and 17,700 parents from the original sample. Addhealth collected data about health-related behaviors, vulnerabilities and strengths, and social environments to name a few. Fryer and Torelli focused on Addhealth data regarding friendship networks.

Fryer and Torelli designed their examination to avoid measurement error problems associated with relying on student self-reports, by developing the Spectral Popularity Index (SPI). The SPI, a popularity index, measured a student's popularity by totaling a student's friends, both within and outside the student's ethnic category. The SPI calculated friendships based on two students reporting one another as friends. For example, Susan reports Adam as her friend but the SPI counts this as a friendship only if

Adam reports Susan as his friend. Fryer and Torelli considered a student to have increased popularity based on the popularity of their friends. For instance, as Adam's popularity increases through his increased number of friendships, Susan's popularity increases as well. Fryer and Torelli admitted that the SPI might not capture very popular students because of other student's reluctance to report them as a friend, or capture friendship networks outside the school. Still, they considered the SPI objective because it did not depend on a single student's self-report. Fryer and Torelli also considered the SPI in relation to Cook and Ludwig's (1997) nationally representative study that used student reports. They found that Cook and Ludwig's analysis only incorporated three values, while the SPI encompassed up to 479. Fryer and Torelli believed that having more variables introduced more variation between popularity and achievement and provided a better opportunity to objectively examine the burden of acting White's existence.

Fryer and Torelli admittedly narrowly defined acting White as "a set of social interactions in which Black adolescents ridicule other Black adolescents for investing in behaviors characteristic of Whites" (p. 3). Their definition differs from Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting White definition, which focused more on an individual Black student's efforts to excel academically while retaining Black community membership. Still, Fryer and Torelli considered the burden of acting White to exist when racial differences existed between popularity and academic achievement. They identified popularity as a student's number of friends, and academic achievement as a student's GPA. Their analysis concentrated on White, Black, and Hispanic students and included the following findings.

Finding one. Fryer and Torelli found large racial differences between popularity and achievement. They found that as White students' GPAs increased so did their popularity. For Black students, they found high GPAs associated with "modestly higher popularity," until they reached a 3.5 GPA, at which point the slope turned negative. Fryer and Torelli calculated that a Black student's 1 standard deviation increase in GPA accompanied a .103% standard deviation decrease in their popularity. They indicated that this effect was not due to limited numbers of high achieving Black students because they accounted for the number of students at each GPA level and found "little to temper the acting White effect" (p. 5). Fryer and Torelli found no distinction for Hispanic students with GPAs between 1 through 2.5 GPA, though their results indicated that at 2.5 GPA the slope turned "sharply" negative, and Hispanic students with a 4.0 GPA were the least popular of all Hispanic students.

Finding two. Fryer and Torelli's analysis highlighted student engagement in extracurricular activities or selecting other "race" friendships. They found that extracurricular activities or selecting other race friends did not explain the "stark" differences in popularity between academic achievers and non-achievers. They also found, after examining effects for students in organized sports, cheerleading, drama, debate, etc, that only the honor society eliminated the racial difference between academic achievement and popularity. In other words, they found discrepancies between Black and White students in regards to their popularity even after students self-selected friends outside their own ethnic groups and/or participated in extracurricular activities. Thus, Fryer and Torelli concluded that involvement in extracurricular activities did not diminish their defined burden of acting White.

Finding three. Fryer and Torelli found the burden of acting White to be virtually non-existent in predominantly Black schools and private schools. In fact, they found a positive relationship between academic achievement and popularity in "all" Black schools. Additionally, they found the burden of acting White to be more prevalent in schools where Black students constituted less than 20% of the overall student body. Fryer and Torelli suggested that, typically Black students attending schools where they occupy less then 20% of the study body live in "buffer" neighborhoods, which they described as Black neighborhoods sitting between predominantly Black and White communities. Fryer and Torelli suggested that two-audience signaling, or the "signals that beget labor market success . . . [and] induce peer rejection" (p. 5) contributed to this finding. They explained that Black students attending predominantly White schools routinely exist in two worlds and feel pressured to affirm their Blackness to Black community members and academic achievement to their predominantly White school. As aforementioned, Bonner (2000) described two-audience signaling, but referred to it as a Black student's survival conflict, which entails students navigating contradictory expectations of their home and school environments. Russell et al. believed buffer zones help establish the burden of acting White and referred to the house slaves' working arrangement as a "buffer" zone in a three-tiered social system, with Europeans atop, field slaves at the bottom, and the house slave in the middle separating the two.

Other findings. Fryer and Torelli's examination reported four additional findings. First, they found Black males to be more likely to experience the burden of acting White than Black females, which could be reflected in more Black females graduating from high school, attending postsecondary education, and earning college

degrees (USDOE, 2004). Second, they found the burden of acting White to be most prevalent amongst low-income public school students, which might pertain to those students' efforts to change their circumstance amidst the culture of poverty. Third, SPI results returned a .101% and .02% decrease in popularity for students in book clubs and math clubs respectively, while students in cheerleading and sports were .239% and .242% respectively more popular. Finally, considering Fryer and Torelli's research revealed a positive relationship between popularity and achievement in predominantly Black schools, they concluded that they found "little" evidence to support Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White. However, Fryer and Torelli may have indeed found the burden of acting White in the fact that they found it to be non-existent at all Black schools and most prevalent in schools where Black students constitute less than 20% of the student body. For instance, in a school where Blacks constitute a minority, these students may be more likely to experience Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White and its manifested survival conflict, and feel pressured to affirm their Black identity through an oppositional identity and academic sabotage or underachievement.

Summary. Fryer and Torelli conducted their nationally representative study examining the burden of acting White's existence and sought to determine if Black students engage in academic underachievement and/or sabotage and/or alienate high achieving Black students. To do so, they used the Addhealth database to correlate popularity with academic achievement. Their results included numerous findings that led them to conclude that their research did not support the burden of acting White's existence. They reached this conclusion mainly because they found a positive relationship between popularity and academic achievement in all Black schools. Yet, in

there findings they did document the survival conflict, which Bonner believes manifests from the burden of acting White. Thus, they may have not found the burden of acting White as much as they found its impact.

Self-hatred and the Burden of Acting White

Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus, and Harpalani's (2001) quantitative research concluded that their sample's Black students did not equate academic achievement with Eurocentric values, or the White American's way of life. They then concluded that Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White failed their scientific testing. More to the point, Spencer et al. alluded to self-hatred's role in perpetuating the burden of acting White. I insert Spencer et al.'s research because Goff et al.'s (2007) research contradicts the self-hatred proposal. Goff et al. cosigned with Fordham and Ogbu's belief that the burden of acting White might evolve from a Black student's quest to control his or her education and life and, in the process, control his or her destiny. Goff et al. addressed Spencer et al.'s self-hatred and referred to the burden of acting White being "a perverted sense of self-control" (p. 142) for many Black students.

Goff, Martin, and Thomas (2007)

Goff et al. (2007) used qualitative methodologies to determine the burden of acting White's existence through determining if six Black junior high students identified as at-risk for school failure and attending an alternative school experienced the burden of acting White. Their research, which they did not consider nationally representative, primarily focused on addressing three areas of inquiry. First, they sought to determine if their sample's six Black students experienced the burden of acting White. Second, if these students experienced the burden of acting White, Goff et al. sought to better

understand the burden of acting White's possible impacts upon their educational and social outcomes. Finally, if students experienced the burden of acting White, Goff et al. sought to better understand how to enable a Black student to overcome the burden of acting White's potentially harmful behaviors and subsequent outcomes. Their results remain pivotal to understanding the burden of acting White's existence, potential impacts on a Black student's educational and social outcomes, and in establishing a course of action to address the burden of acting White.

Goff et al. conducted their research at a suburban city's alternative school for students labeled at-risk for school failure or who had already failed a grade. They chose this setting for three specific reasons. First, they chose the alternative school because White students constituted the majority of its students and Fryer and Torelli (2006) believed Black students attending predominantly White schools to be most likely to experience the burden of acting White. Second, they chose the alternative school to better understand how, if it existed, the burden of acting White might contribute to a Black student's academic and/or social failures. Finally, they chose their setting because the school's principal informed them that, at her school, they would have ample opportunity to study the burden of acting White. Their purposeful sampling returned a sample of six Black students, the school's principal, and five educators who had at least one participating student in class. They employed observations, audiotaped interviews, and disposable cameras to address their three primary areas of inquiry.

Goff et al.'s research began by determining if the burden of acting White even existed. They explored this inquiry through observations and interviews designed to ascertain students burden of acting White experiences and through conducting a focus

group where they might observe the burden of acting White. Before discussing Goff et al.'s research, I acknowledge that they apparently learned from other burden of acting White researchers, as they adhered to Ogbu's (1991) advice and did not simply ask direct questions about the Black students' condition. Rather, they triangulated multiple audiotaped individual and group interviews, observations, and the students' own expressed perceptions to triangulate and secure a more holistic view of the burden of acting White. Also, they used triangulation techniques because Bogdan and Biklen (2003) said, to "establish a fact you need more than one source of information" (p. 107). I now address Goff et al.'s findings in relation to student experiences with the burden of acting White and the focus group in which they believed they witnessed the burden of acting White.

Student experiences with the burden of acting White. Goff et al. presented Sally as a biracial female student, who self-identified herself as Black. The school's educators regarded Sally, who I consider to be a burden of acting White worst-case scenario, as the most intelligent student ever to attend the alternative school, though her placement resulted from academic failure. When asked had she ever experienced the burden of acting White, Sally initially said "no," but then recounted the following story. Sally said she was once a straight A student until a "Black girl" commented, after seeing her report card, "you're Black and you're first [academically] in the class . . . dang, you act White" (p. 138). Sally said she asked why the girl said such a thing and the girl said it was because of her grades. Sally said the remarks had no impact on her alternative school placement, although shortly after, she promptly failed the eighth grade, twice.

Goff et al. considered Sally's behavior consistent with Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White academic sabotage and underachievement.

Goff et al. presented Mark's burden of acting White, which they found through interviews and observations, to be self-imposed. A self-imposed burden of acting White remains consistent with Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) assertion that some students experience the burden of acting White because they define themselves to act White. Goff et al. described Mark as an academically average student, who said he believed he could be a straight A student if he so decided. They presented observations and interview information to illustrate Mark's self-imposed burden of acting White, which they first observed when an interviewer arrived at Mark's English class. Upon arriving at the class and asking that Mark join him for an interview, the teacher commented aloud that Mark was "a great writer." Presumably, other students heard the teacher's comment, as Mark "very noticeably slid along the wall until he went outside the classroom and out of view of the students and the teacher" (Goff et al., 2007, p. 138). Once outside the classroom and out of view of the teacher and students, the researcher asked Mark about his behavior. Mark replied that his classmates would not see anything above a C on his report card because, "I don't want them saying I act White" (Goff et al., 2007, p. 138). Goff et al. considered Mark's behavior consistent Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White academic sabotage and underachievement.

Typically when discussing the burden of acting White, researchers focus on academic and/or behavioral outcomes. Yet, Goff et al.'s research illuminated other burden of acting White components. They documented that the burden of acting White may include language and dress deemed White, and thereby, oppositional to the Black

identity. They reached this conclusion after observing Black students segregate James to the "White" cafeteria table, after asking James about the incident, and after asking if he had any other similar experiences. They quoted James as saying that Black classmates told him he acted White because of his grades, speech, and dress. These findings remain consistent with Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White and its underlying oppositional identity, as Black classmates deemed James's speech and dress to be White, and thereby, oppositional to the Black identity. These findings also remain consistent with Fordham and Ogbu and Russell et al.'s positions about the burden of acting Whites originations and a Black student's opposition to things considered "White."

Goff et al. also presented Adam and described him as a student with strong family support and a mother who held an advanced college degree. Adam, who had just relocated from one of the United States largest cities and from a predominantly Black school, indicated that he attended the alternative school at his parents' request. They believed the alternative school might ease his transition to the new city and help with his grades. Adam self-reportedly had not experienced the burden of acting White until arriving at the alternative school, which remains consistent with Fryer and Torelli's (2006) findings that academic achievement does not manifest the burden of acting White in "Black schools" as much as it does in schools where Black students represent a minority. Thus, Goff et al. considered Adam as another burden of acting White example.

Through Goff et al.'s triangulated qualitative investigations, they believed they addressed their first area of inquiry, which focused on determining if their sample's six Black students ever experienced the burden of acting White. This inquiry, they hoped

might enable them to determine if the burden of acting White truly existed. This inquiry contributed to students recounting burden of acting White experiences ranging from a Black student telling another Black student that he or she acted White to students calling Brenda "the little blonde" (Goff et al., 2007, p. 138). This inquiry contributed to Tony's admission to witnessing a Black student being "picked on" because of his "good grades" and how the "punishment" worsened after the student began "acting Black." These burden of acting White experiences, along with each participating teachers' acknowledgement that they had heard a Black student tell another Black student that he or she acted White, led Goff et al. to conclude the burden of acting White to be a reality experienced by many Black students.

Focus group. Goff et al. sought other evidences of the burden of acting White's existence, which resulted in an audiotaped student focus group. During the 45-minute focus group, they presented the exact same questions they presented during individual interviews. They believed this line of questioning might reveal the burden of acting White as a student changed the response she or he provided during her or his individual interview. I now discuss a particular incident that Goff et al. believed to be the burden of acting White. The incident stemmed from the question, have you ever heard a Black student tell another Black student that he or she acted White. James who, during his individual interview, admitted that people told him he acted White changed, his response to no. Sally and Tony who, during their individual interviews said they never told a Black student that he or she acted White and also said they never would, told James he acted White. They further said that he heard it everyday because of the way he spoke. Goff et al. documented, while all the other students except Adam laughed,

James's speech and posture began to mimic Sally's and Tony's, which is when Sally said, "look at him over there trying to act Black" (p. 141). When asked why they believed Blacks tell other Blacks they act White, Adam defended James by saying to the group that he believed they were "jealous." Adam then looked directly at Sally and Tony and said, "they shouldn't be, cause it's their fault . . . I don't see how you can be jealous of someone's grades." (Goff et al., 2007, p. 141). Sally and Tony's attacks on James and the group's laughter ceased, as Adam's remarks seemed to have empowered James, who then said the one comment with which each student agreed. James made the one comment that seemed to encapsulate the group's sentiment about why Blacks tell other Blacks they act White when he said, "I think it's a bunch of people who want to be something else, but they don't think they need the education to do it" (p. 143).

Student definitions of acting Black and White. Goff et al. believed the focus group enabled them to observe the burden of acting White, which further fortified their belief in the burden of acting White's existence. Yet, they still remained unsure about its true nature, which fueled their efforts to better understand the burden of acting White. To better understand the burden of acting White, they sought to better understand student definitions of acting Black and White. They once again employed triangulation to coordinate observations with interview responses to determine how students defined acting Black and White. In regards to observations, they documented students defining acting Black and White according to grades, clothing, posture, speech, and peer associations. In regards to interview responses, they documented students identifying acting Black in terms of sagging pants, failing grades, and using slang. When asked to define acting White, only Sally responded. She said that the researcher, who Goff et al.

described as an articulate bald headed Black male with a gold hoop earring in each ear and who dressed in casual business attire while conducting research activities at the alternative school, should know. She said he should know because he acted White.

The students acting Black and White definitions remain consistent with Ford's (2006) findings. Ford, who conducted very similar research with very similar outcomes, examined academic achievement and underachievement and their relationships with attitudes and behaviors. Her study, which included 928 fourth through twelfth grade students (912 Black students), found that Black students identified being intelligent, academically oriented, speaking Standard English, having White friends, and being "uppity" as acting White. Ford's students identified acting Black as being "ghetto," dumb or stupid, speaking non-Standard English, and wearing sagging clothing. Thus, it appears hat Black students associate acting Black with socially unaccepted behaviors and acting White it socially accepted behaviors, or as Peterson-Lewis and Bratton (2004) found, Black students tend to identify acting Black in terms of the "qualities that are most readily observable among teenage and young adult males in low-income urban centers" (p. 89). Essentially, these researchers suggested that many Black students hold uncomplimentary perceptions of themselves, which remains consistent with Freire's aforementioned research about oppressed people's acceptance and personification of abominable stereotypes.

Postschool visions and the burden of acting White. Understanding student definitions of acting Black and White and what that could mean to a Black student who perceived him or her self to be inferior, in a sense, necessitated that Goff et al. find avenues to enable a Black student to successfully navigate the burden of acting White's

harmful impacts. Almost by chance, they happened upon a course of action when one of the researchers noticed that half the students had produced the academic and social outcomes necessary to return to their home school. The researcher then asked about these students' commonalities, if any existed. This line of questioning resulted in their finding that students with a clearly articulated postschool vision seemed to overcome the burden of acting White. For example, Adam said he concentrated on his grades because he wanted to play basketball on his home school's basketball team so he could one day earn a collegiate scholarship that would help pay for his graduate studies. Sally, who was attending the alternative school's credit recovery program, said she wanted to graduate on time and attend college like her uncle. Mark said he desired to return to his home school in time for the upcoming basketball season and play on the school's basketball team so he could earn a college scholarship and one day play in the National Basketball Association. Goff et al. then posited that having a postschool goal enabled these three students to successfully navigate the burdens of acting White. They further suggested that having a postschool goal enabled these three students to assume control over their education, lives, and destiny.

Student photographs. Still triangulating, Goff et al. sought other evidences of how to enable students to successfully navigate the burden of acting White. It was then that they turned to their research's student photograph component. As a part of their research, Goff et al. provided students a 24-exposure disposable camera and instructed them to photograph anything they believed influenced their academic orientations, or their attitudes, values, and beliefs about their education (Ford, 1993). In essence, Goff et al. sought to determine what held influence and power to perpetuate or circumvent a

Black student's burden of acting White, and as a result, might have the power to assist a Black student's overcoming of his or her burden of acting White.

Goff et al.'s students returned 86 photos with 63 (78%) photos containing images captured at home or of family members. During individual interviews, which consisted of a students developed photos all displayed across a table, they asked students to describe each photo and discuss why they chose to photograph the image. Student responses indicated that each student believed their family to be of extreme importance in shaping their academic orientations. Interestingly ironic, students only returned 10 photos containing their own face, and no males returned photographs containing their face. Two females returned photo containing their faces. Sally returned nine photographs containing her image, to which she replied, "I just jumped in" (p. 140). Brenda returned only one photograph containing her face, which she dismissed when she said her mother took the photograph. When questioned about their absence in their very own photographs, the students' consensus was that they did not think about it. Goff et al. concluded that the students did not understand or believe in the control they held over their educations and seemed reclined to the fact that they did not control their education. Goff et al. considered this a demonstrated lack of feeling in control of their education, which remains consistent with Fordham and Ogbu's burden of acting White.

Teachers intervening to counteract the burden of acting White. Goff et al. continued to seek out evidences they might use to enable student to successfully navigate the burden of acting White. In doing so, they interviewed participating teachers who had at least one of the study's Black students in a class. None of the study's five teachers acknowledged ever hearing the term burden of acting White, but each

acknowledged hearing Black students tell one another that he or she acted White because of grades, dress, and/or language. Each teacher also seemed to have a prime example of student they believed to be enthralled with the burden of acting White. Two teachers, independent of one another, presented the same story. They discussed a Black male, who they believed to be intelligent, articulate, and one who "sabotaged his future" (Goff et al., 2007, p. 139). One teacher remarked that they believed he sought to "prove that he didn't have to do that crap [academics], and seemed to display to other Black students that he was smart enough to realize that education was not important" (Goff et al., 2007, p. 139). When discussing burden of acting White outcomes, teachers spoke of dumbing down, masking academic abilities, academic underachievement and failure, special education placement, increased dropout rates, and poor postschool transition outcomes. Still, each teacher admittedly had "no idea of how to intervene to counteract the undesirable changes brought on by the burden of acting White" (Goff et al., 2007, p. 139).

Goff et al. concluded their research efforts with the belief that the burden of acting White existed. They also concluded that they had five salient findings. First, they found five of the six participating students self-reportedly having experienced the burden of acting White (they did not consider Adam to have experienced the burden of acting White before arriving at the alternative school). Still, they found three students admitting to masking their academic abilities and three admitting to telling other Black students that they acted White. Second, they found that each student defined acting Black, but only one student defined acting White. Third, students used disposable cameras to return 80 photographs with 63 photographs (78%) consisting of family

members and/or the students' homes, which suggested that the Black family significantly influenced their educational perceptions, attitudes, and values. Fourth, Goff et al. found that each participating educator self-reportedly had had a Black student in class who the educator believed experienced the burden of acting White, though each educator reported no skills to intervene. Fifth and most intriguing, each of the study's students, who demonstrated the necessary academic and social criteria required to return to their home schools, had clearly stated postschool goals and believed their postschool goals contributed to their improved academic and social skills.

Summary. Goff et al.'s research, through triangulating various phenomenological data sources, demonstrated the burden of acting White's existence and its possible contributions to the in-school and postschool challenges experienced by six Black student's identified to be at-risk for school failure and attending an alternative school. Their research also documented students defining acting Black using uncomplimentary terms, but seem to be at a loss when defining acting White. Their research also provides insights as to having clearly articulated postschool goals' abilities to empower Black students to overcome the burden of acting White. Their research further implicates the Black family's potential for discontinuing the burden of acting White.

Goff et al.'s research also provides support for Ford's (1993) research. Ford conducted mixed method research with 148 fifth and sixth grade Black students to determine how family academic orientation and family demographics influenced the academic underachievement and academic orientations of urban Black students. She defined academic orientation as a psychological factor consisting of a student's

attitudes, beliefs, and values about education. When Ford compared family demographics and academic orientations, she found the family's academic orientation to have "greater influence . . . on Black students' achievement orientation" (Ford, 1993, p. 59). She also found that higher degrees of importance placed on education by family members correlated with higher levels of achievement orientation and achievement in Black students. Ford found that Black students who "strongly agreed" that their parents placed high importance on education also reported experiencing more support. Goff et al.'s phenomenology supports Ford's research.

Most significantly, Goff et al. posited that the burden of acting White might actually be a Black student's attempts to control his or her education, though these individuals often make non-academic decision. They further suggested that by understanding the burden of acting White as a deficit might preclude one from understanding that it may be an unexplored strength. Goff et al. believed that Black students engaged in the burden of acting White need to be provided the necessary decision making, goal setting, and goal attainment skills to set and attain more appropriate (pro-academic) goals and identify postschool visions and the accompanying goals. Goff et al. seemed to speak directly to deficit thinkers when they said, "self-hatred might not be the only perpetuator of the burden of acting White. A Black student's burden of acting White may actually be a cry for help in the form of a perverted sense of self-control" (p. 142).

My Burden of Acting White

Now that I have explored the burden of acting White's possible contributions to a Black student's education and special education overrepresentation, which I did

through defining the burden of acting White and presenting it possible origins and controversial existence, I must share my very own burden of acting White. Reading the previous sections, might enable one to better understand why and how a Black student might experience the burden of acting White. The previous sections might enable one to better understand what the burden of acting White looks like. The previous sections, however, I do not believe enable one to feel the burden of acting White. Somewhat, against my own will I share my burden of acting White to convey what it feels like to live amidst a burden of acting White. To share this feeling, I acknowledge that I am Chauncey Demond Goff, the first author of Goff et al.'s burden of acting White investigation. I am the researcher that the young lady defined acting Black by saying, "you know, it's like you." Her exact words do not appear in Goff et al.'s publication, yet maturation allows me to include them here so you can grasp the full effect of what it feels like to experience the burden of acting White.

Before sharing my burden of acting White, I admit that I entered my doctoral studies with a sincere phobia of losing my Black identity and community membership. I also admit that I am a writer who holds a love and hate relationship with my writing. In one instance, I so love to write because there exists moments when I am free. When I say "free," I do not mean the freedom that comes from begin able to do whatever one wishes whenever one wishes. When I say free, I mean that freedom that comes from being oblivious to time and life itself. When I say free, I mean a freedom that escapes my comprehension and words. However, in another instance, I hate writing because at no point am I free from feeling my emotions, especially the emotions I would rather not feel or share. It is now that I enter deep into Huck Finn's solitude because this is a most

personal and private experience. I need you to understand that you are about to read directly from my diary with the understanding that my poetry, and diary for that matter, is merely my conversation with God. While reading my from diary, I only ask that you remember Erykah Badu's words, "keep in mind that I'm an artist, and I'm sensitive about my shit" (Badu, 1997).

Here I am, as I lay in my bed in my dimly amber lit room, with a candle heating vanilla scented oil. I lay in my bed listening to a Rachelle Ferrell, Yolanda Adams, Erykah Badu, LeDerick Horne, Goapele, Sweetback, and Cyndi Lauper medley. It seems as if I have been an inanimate object for hours, and Kelly Price's "It Will Rain" and Tupac's "Krazy" speak the only words that break the silence. Now all I hear and feel is Tupac saying,

> Last year was a hard one, but life goes on. Bumping my head against the wall learning right from wrong. They say my ghetto instrumental's detrimental to kids, as if they can't see the misery in which they live . . . Watching time fly, I love my people do or die. But I wonder why, we scared to let each other fly . . . No one can understand me. The Black sheep, outcasted from my family. (Skakur, 1995)

How did I feel when the young lady defined acting White by saying, "you know, it's like you?" To make a long story short, I felt confused. I felt the confusion of an emotional rollercoaster, though I remained professionally professional. Professionalism became my defense mechanism to ward off the many similar reminders that, as an educated Black man, I had somehow sold-out. Though, after getting home that evening, I sat contemplating if, in her innocence, she spoke a truth I had opportunistically

forgotten. I so desired to be a victim. In essence, I felt like the Lone Ranger, without Silver or Tonto, who stood enthralled in an identity conflict. Was I a victim, a sell-out, or an educated Black man? For that matter, what did it matter?

I entered my university's Special Education doctoral program as its first Black student. I studied and became fascinated with self-determination's potential to enable my Black community to relinquish our dependency on victimization and accept the responsibility and power for our circumstance. I entered that alternative school to better understand the burden of acting White and self-determination's, or its lack thereof, impacts on the school's Black students' academic successes and failures. Around that same time, another Black male doctoral student asked me to join him in a rally at a local public high school to protest the school district's purposeful, systematic, and legal segregation of Black and White students. The school district built a new high school across a highway that effectively divided the haves and have-nots. I asked if he would send his daughter, whom I understood attended a private school, to the predominantly Black high school in its present condition. He replied, "hell no!" I then asked why he would want another, White or Black, to send their child to the school. After much deliberation, in which he cited "White folks" as the problem and I cited an apathetic American society content with such educational chaos, he called me a "sell-out." Throughout the remainder of our infrequent meetings, he continued to call me a sell-out. He even did so just before I edited the PowerPoint presentation he used to defend his dissertation, which he did not invite me to attend.

I hope I understand my confusion. I hope I understand that at that time, I received constant reminders that I was selling-out my Black community, though I truly

believed I was performing my duties as a Black man. I hope I understand that my confusion and feelings of selling-out led to academic sabotage and underachievement until my final day in my university office before Christmas break. My advisor, a White man, came to me as I sat playing chess on my laptop. He asked if I needed to talk, to which I replied, "no." He then spoke calmly, wisely, and friendly as he discussed my lack of productivity and attitude change. He told me that Special Education needed a radical transformation and he believed I could do it. He continued to say that I would do things he only dreamed of doing, and I would make them look easy. I could not help but to ask why he believed in me so much. He told me I was gifted, and that my gifts were given to me for a distinct purpose and if I did not realize and achieve that purpose, I would be selling-out myself. He instructed me to think about that over break. I did not need a break to wonder if he understood the significance of his use of "selling-out."

It was at that point that I did as I have always done when I needed a respite. I went fishing. I cast my troubles into my parents' pond, yet the pond must have been too cold, for all I reeled in were questions. If my enslaved and "free" ancestors died for my right to receive an education, would I not be selling them out by choosing academic sabotage and underachievement? Would I not be selling out six-year-old Ruby Bridges, credited to be one of the first Black students to integrate an American school (1960), by not taking full advantage of my educational opportunities? By sabotaging my education, would I not be selling out my mother and father's sacrifices? By purposefully underachieving, would I not be selling out my two sons? By disowning education, would not I be selling out myself? Who was this young lady to define me? Who was this young lady to define being Black? Who was I to allow her to make these definitions?

Was the Black community splintering along financial lines, and if so, was it a natural part of evolution? Why did it seem that anything I did reflected from or upon my Black identity? Did my Black community allow our least educated members to define our identity? Did being Black mean being a victim? If there is such a thing, who was really selling out my Black community? What indeed would Jesus do? Those questions drove me to another respite. I began reading and writing. I read everything I could find about the burden of acting White, and on November 15, 2006, some two years after the incident, I wrote the following poem:

> There I was, as I arrived at the university.
> There I was Ralph Ellison's invisible man,
> wondering if my tasseled veil was being removed or fitted.
>
> There I was contemplating the true identity of my veil,
> was it slavery?
> was it ignorance?
> was it fear?
>
> There I was, but there I could not be.
> Thus, I decided to research me.
> I found through experience my very own burden of acting White,
> my fear of having my membership revoked.
>
> There I was at the door of no return,
> on one side academic acclaim, and on the other ostracism.
> So I backslid into sabotage to prove my niggerness.
> There I was, but there I could not be.
>
> My research led to understanding,
> as that young lady defined acting White,
> *you know, it's like you.*
> There I was.
>
> I was *you.*
> But there I could not be,
> for at my essence, I am me.
> Then I understood my veil as a combination of slavery, ignorance, and fear.
>
> For each, I allowed to remove my freedom.

There I was listening to Miss Jackson say,
Wherever you run,
there you will be.
There I was no more.

Now, I am here. (Goff, 2006)

I write poetry to understand me, and after reading that poem, and specifically its final line, I read "he who . . . conceives trouble gives birth to disillusionment" (The Holy Bible, 1995, p. 785), which was a scripture my mother always quoted and displayed prominently in our home. I read and understood my burden of acting White, academic underachievement and sabotage, the disempowerment I experienced, and my identity conflict. I read and understood that it was not others calling me a sell-out. I called me a sell-out. I called me a sell-out to extinguish my burning desire, purpose, and goal to challenge my Black community to be at its best. I called me a sell-out to forgive my responsibility to challenge my Black community to understand that we are not victims unless we accept victimization. To challenge my Black community to be its best, I would have to convey that White folks are not our biggest problem. I would have to convey that Blacks have become Blacks biggest problem. Who chooses to be the one to say this when that one understands alienation and loneliness?

I then revisited my identity conflict, and realized I had no conflict. I had a keen awareness of my identity. I also began understanding that my purpose became my identity. In many respects, I am, and have always been, my purpose. Thus, I am a reflection of my goals, which I set to accomplish my purpose. From that moment, I accepted my identity, and accepted me. I then understood that I had not sold-out. I had remained true to a goal of gaining the abilities needed to encourage, challenge, and empower my Black community to be the people in which our ancestors could feel and

believe that their sacrifices and lives were not in vain. I then understood and believed that I was never a victim nor sell-out. I became aware of my identity and that I had remained true to my goals and purpose. I was self-determined.

After returning from break, I sat and spoke with my advisor. We had a sincere, open, and honest heart-to-heart discussion. To make a long story short, I detailed my life's story. While doing so, I realized that throughout my life I had experienced many opportunities to re-direct my life. I also realized that, at each opportunity, I had revisited my goals to make decisions. In other words, every time I faced a challenge I asked myself how this aligned with my goals, and purpose. I eventually realized that I was a reflection of my purpose. While talking, I told him that, before I was ever familiar with the term self-determination, being self-determined enabled me to be me.

I also admitted that I understood that I was afraid to stand amidst a nation of Blacks and tell them enough is enough. I was afraid to tell a nation of Blacks that our in-school and postschool outcomes, graduation, incarceration, and illiteracy rates, and special and gifted education disproportional representation were not the lone responsibility of White folks. We are responsible for ourselves and, as long as we say White folks did it, we are relinquish our power to the very White folks we condemn. In effect, in doing so, we are becoming slaves and shackling our own necks. No! I am no sell-out. No! I am not lost. If anything, I am afraid to lead my Black community. Oh how I felt Pac when he said, "Watching time fly, I love my people do or die. But I wonder why, we scared to let each other fly. No one can understand me. The Black sheep, outcasted from my family." No summation necessary, save one final question. Do

you feel my burden of acting White and its disempowerment and how it became a strength?

Summary. It appears that various positions exist about the burden of acting White's existence, though Fordham and Ogbu's research demonstrated the burden of acting White's existence and the coping mechanisms Black students employed to circumvent the burden of acting White's impacts. However, various studies examining the burden of acting White's existence discredit its existence. Some found the burden of acting White's non-existence based on student (a) self-reports, (b) that Black students were not any more oppositional to academic achievement than other groups of students, (c) that Black students do not lose friends based on academic achievement, and (d) that Black students' academic achievement was associated with increased friendships in predominantly Black schools. Others argued that Black students do not equate academic success with White folks, and thus, do not hold the self-hatred needed to perpetuate the burden of acting White. Others maintain that the burden of acting White exists and may not result from self-hatred and posit, as did Fordham and Ogbu, that the burden of acting White may exist as a Black student's attempts to control their education and destiny.

Whichever position one accepts, one cannot deny the disempowerment associated with the burden of acting White and its unspoken assertion that, as James said, "White people are smarter then Black people" (Goff et al., 2007, p, 138). Now the question remains, "so what." So what does all this mean? To address this inquiry, I seek the empowerment that contradicts the overrepresentation story's disempowerment. I seek self-determination.

Self-Determination

Unto this juncture, I presented the Black students' special education overrepresentation story, which I framed around disempowerment. In doing so, I presented the mathematics used to define overrepresentation. I presented overrepresentation's postschool transition outcomes and their contributions to a Black student's dissatisfaction with his or her quality of life and repetitive special education placement cycle. I described overrepresentation perpetuators and how many seem to emerge from deficit thinking and postschool transition outcomes. I described the so-called solutions' omissions of Black students and its subsequent learned helplessness. I described the self-fulfilling prophecy of Black inferiority and its evolution as the burden of acting White, which I described as a Black student's pursuit to control his or her education and destiny. In all, I articulated that the Black students' special education overrepresentation might be a manifestation of the slave society's misperception of the Black student as inherently and intellectually inferior chattel, and how some view overrepresentation as proof that misperception has become reality. I crafted my words as such to demonstrate the ever-present systematic educational efforts employed to disempower the Black student because, "education leads to knowledge, and knowledge leads to power" (Ward, 1996), and an uneducated Black student in many ways is a powerless Black student who becomes America's slave society's inherently and intellectually inferior chattel. Essentially, I described the Black students' special education overrepresentation story as a continuation of the slave society's tactics to create a Black student who accepts inferiority, or as Fanon said (1963), accepts the identity of the slave.

Kauffman (1999) spoke about special education's messages for tomorrow and said, "much of the research in special education today is not about teaching and learning" (p. 247). His "commentary" discussed ills that plague special education and specifically focused on researchers' perpetuation of ignorance. I am a researcher who in many ways, discussed the Black students' special education overrepresentation, while demonstrating the qualifications I possessed that might enable my entrance into the higher education fraternity. Thereby, for the most part, I chose researchers as my audience. Yet and sadly, if I continue on this path, I became a foreshadowing of Kauffman's special education of tomorrow. Let me demonstrate.

I could spend the next few pages discussing my belief that to address the Black students' special education overrepresentation necessitates empowering the Black student and community, for they are the solution. I could present my belief that we could spend the rest of eternity discussing methods of addressing overrepresentation that exclude the Black student and community, yet, until we include the Black student and community, we but waste time. I could then present self-determination as the empowering agent that might enable Black students and their communities to address special education overrepresentation, for self-determination provides the skills and internal locus of control necessary to produce the in-school and postschool transition outcomes that deter special education placement. To do so, I would begin by including an introductory paragraph illustrating my belief that,

> what we see in special education's disproportional representation of Black students is the same battle Blacks have waged since arriving on North America soil as enslaved Africans . . . [and] Blacks have bled,

cried, and died to be free and have the freedom to control their education and destinies (Goff, 2007).

I would then articulate my belief that the Black students' special education overrepresentation remains of the utmost importance, for I understand it as a means to satisfy my doctoral dissertation responsibilities and the academy's rite of passage. I would emphasize that, more than completing a dissertation or acquiring a rite of passage, I understand the Black students' special education overrepresentation to be of the utmost importance because I understand it as an element of the Black students and community's struggle for freedom. I would assert that this dissertation's purpose, and particularly this section's purpose, resides in speaking as a Black student and community. member to the Black student and the Black community. While doing so, I would encourage them to control their education and destinies by producing generations of educated and empowered Black students. Lastly, without saying, I would say that this dissertation serves the purpose to establish my niche as the one who would empower.

I would then open by first operationalizing the self-determination construct, which includes identifying self-determination definitions and choosing one to guide forthcoming discussions. I would next present self-determination as an educational outcome to illustrate its associated skills. Third, I would present researchers' accounts of self-determination's history. Fourth, I would present a personal reflection of an individual with a disability who experienced self-determination's maturation. Fifth, I would preset the self-determination learning theory accompanying my selected self-determination. Sixth, I would present a best-practice for increasing a student's self-determination. Finally, I would present my rationale for choosing self-determination as a

means of addressing the Black students' special education overrepresentation, which resides in its abilities to empower Black students. Indulge me, as I continue the demonstration.

Operationalizing self-determination. Before operationalizing the self-determination construct, I briefly provide context to the various self-determination definitions. In 1988, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) sought to include individuals with disabilities in OSERS, as well as the individual's own, decision-making processes (Ward, 1996). The initiative resulted in an OSERS Work Group staffed by individuals with disabilities. The OSERS charged the Work Group to examine self-determination in terms of (a) the OSERS's internal operations, (b) individuals with disabilities, and (c) to develop an action plan the OSERS might use to appropriate funding (Ward, 1996). The Work Group, which defined self-determination in terms of "the attitudes and abilities, which lead individuals to define goals for themselves and to take the initiative in achieving those goals" (as cited in Ward, 1996, p. 12.), focused on self-actualization, assertiveness, creativity, and pride.

In 1989, in response to the OSERS Work Group's 29 recommendations, 60 individuals with disabilities participated in the National Conference on Self-Determination (Ward, 1996; Woods, 2008). The conference enabled individuals with disabilities, parents, and state and local administrators to share the ideas that concluded in recommendations for increased federal level self-determination initiatives (Ward, 1996). Afterwards, the OSERS's Secondary Education and Transitional Services for Youth with Disabilities Program supported 26 projects designed to develop self-

determination curricula and instructional packages (Ward, 1996). Ward and Kohler (1996) analyzed these 26 projects to find 20 including curricula designed to increase student decision-making, goal setting, self-awareness, and self-advocacy. Overall, the projects emphasized things such as (a) futures planning designed to be a person-centered approach to increase the self-determination necessary for future success, (b) a project specifically designed to enable youth with disabilities to achieve their "dreams," (c) creating self-determination curricula specifically for youth with physical disabilities or other health impairments, and (d) projects designed to increase student self-determination levels through developing their goal setting and decision-making skills (Ward, 1996). The initiatives, which Woods (2008) believed began special education's self-determination movement, concluded with the development of numerous self-determination definitions. Table 8 presents various self-determination definitions and differentiates whether the definition relates to goal setting and goal attainment or choice.

Table 8

Self-Determination Definitions

Author	Year	Strand	Definition
Nirje	1972	Choice	Self-determination is a critical component of the normalization principle, which advocates that choices, wishes, and aspirations of people be considered in actions affecting them.
Deci & Ryan	1985	Choice	Self-determination is the capacity of

			individuals to choose and then have those choices be the driving force of their actions.
Williams	1990	Choice	Self-determination refers to the attitudes and abilities required to act as the primary causal agent in one's own life and to make choices regarding one's actions free form undue external influence.
Schloss, Alpers, & Jayne	1994	Choice	Self-determination is a person's capacity to choose and have those choices be the determinants of one's actions.
Wehmeyer & Field	2007	Choice	To act as the primary causal agent in one's life and make choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference
Ward	1988	Goal Setting & Goal Attainment	Self-determination is the attitudes and abilities that lead individuals to define goals for themselves and to take the initiative in achieving those goals
Wolman, et al.	1994	Goal Setting & Goal Attainment	A self-determined person knows and can express his needs, interests, and abilities. He seta appropriate goals, make choices and plans in pursuit of the goals, and makes adjustments as needed to achieve them.

Martin, Marshall, & Maxson	1993	Goal Setting & Goal Attainment	Self-determined individuals know what they want and how to get it. From an awareness of personal needs, self-determined individuals choose goals, and then doggedly pursue them. This involves asserting an individual's presence, making his or her needs known, evaluating progress toward meeting goals, adjusting performance as needed, and creating unique approaches to solve problems.
Field & Hoffman	1994	Goal Setting & Goal Attainment	Self-determination is a person's ability to define and achieve goals from a base of knowing and valuing oneself.
Serna & Lau-Smith	1995	Goal Setting & Goal Attainment	Self-determination refers to an awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, the ability to set goals and make choices, to be assertive at appropriate times, and to interact with others in a socially competent manner. A self-determined person is able to make independent decisions based on his or her ability to use resources, which includes collaborating and networking with others. The outcome for a self-determined person is

			the ability to realize his or her own potential, to become a productive member of a community, and to obtain his or her goals without infringing on the rights, responsibilities, and goals of others.
Mithaug et al.	1998	Goal Setting & Goal Attainment	Self-determination is the repeated use of skills necessary to act on the environment in order to attain goals that satisfy self-defined needs and interests.

Goal setting, goal attainment and choice remain self-determination central foci (Walden, 2002), and differentiating between the two strands I believe conveys a better understanding of the various definitions. Goal setting and goal attainment centered definitions focus on an individual's capacities to set and attain goals. Goal setting and goal attainment, which may be self-determination's most pivotal behavior, Konrad et al. (2007) found to be the most productive intervention component when increasing a student's self-determination levels. Martin and Marshall (1995) developed a most notarized goal setting and goal attainment self-determination definition, which reads,

> self-determined individuals know what they want and how to get it. From an awareness of personal needs, self-determined individual set goal, and they the doggedly pursue their goals. This involves asserting their presence, making their needs known, evaluating progress toward meeting their goal, adjusting their performance as needed, and creating unique approaches to solve problems (p. 147).

Choice centered definitions focus on an individual's capacities to choose. Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) and Ryan and Deci (2000) understood self-determination from individuals' intrinsic (i.e., psychological needs such as relatedness, competence, and autonomy) and extrinsic (i.e., independent reward, external regulation, introjection, identification, and integration) motivational needs. They believed self-determined individuals possessed the free will and capacities to choose and allow their choices to lead their actions. Accordingly, Deci (1980) defined self-determination as "the process of utilizing one's will" (p. 26).

Many self-determination definitions exist and to bring some uniformity within self-determination discussions, Field et al. (1998), when developing the Council for Exceptional Children's DCDT transition position statement, combined the various definitions to define self-determination as:

> as a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults (p. 115).

Summary. It seems that self-determination means many different things to many different people. For my purposes, self-determination connotes the empowerment that enables and individual to be "the primary causal agent in [his or her] life and make choices and decisions regarding [his or her] quality of life free from undue external

influence or interference" (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007, p. 3). The words "primary causal agent" indicate the individual employed purposeful action to achieve a desired outcome (Wehmeyer, 1996). A Black student embodying this self-determination would be responsible for her or his condition, which would be a direct juxtaposition to the learned helplessness and disempowerment concentrated in their overrepresentation story. The words "make choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life" suggest that a Black student embodying this self-determination would possess and demonstrate the behaviors necessary to determine his or her in-school and postschool transition outcomes, and thereby determine his or her quality of life. The words "free from undue external influence or interference," I believe to be self-explanatory, as they imply that the Black student would be free to be free.

Self-determination as an educational outcome. As an educational outcome, Wehmeyer (2005) considered self-determination as a psychological construct. He believed this self-determination implied that "individuals cause themselves to act" (Wehmeyer, 2005, p. 116). Wehmeyer further advanced that this self-determination hinged on an individual's conscious choice, or the power to make such a choice. To be self-determined, Wehmeyer believed individuals needed to act autonomously and self-regulate, which he believed increased their psychological empowerment and contributed to self-realization.

Wehmeyer believed, to be self-determined, one must act autonomously, or act in accordance with one's understood preferences, interests, and abilities free from undue external influence or interference, which is to say that many Black students might be free from the self-fulfilling prophecy of Black inferiority and free to demonstrate

academic achievement. He also believed self-regulation to be an essential self-determination educational component. Wehmeyer, as did Agran (1997), described self-regulation in terms of the self-monitoring, self-instruction, self-evaluation, self-reinforcement, goal setting, and problem solving behaviors that enable one to organize, and thereby, navigate one's environment. Whitman (1990) described self-regulation as,

> a complex response system that enables individuals to examine their environments and their repertoires of responses for coping with those environments to make decisions about how to act, to act, to evaluation the desirability of the outcomes of the actions, and to revise their plans as necessary. (p. 373)

These self-management strategies, which Agran (1997) considered prerequisites for becoming the causal agent in one's life, might enable Black students to assume more control over their education and destinies by providing them the skills necessary to be in control. Wehmeyer (2005) discussed psychological empowerment as an individual's belief that she or he possessed the internal locus of control, skills, and self-efficacy necessary to achieve a desired outcome. Psychological empowerment resides as a cognitive self-determination behavior and might enable Black students to internally combat the misperception of their intellectual inferiority. Wehmeyer (2005) described self-realization in terms of an individual's "comprehensive, and reasonably accurate, knowledge of themselves and their strengths and limitations . . . [that enable her or him] . . . to act in such a manner as to capitalize on this knowledge" (p. 26) and interpret their behavior. Self-realizing Black students would critique their behaviors to ensure the behaviors and themselves remain self-determined.

Wehmeyer's self-determination as an educational outcome includes individuals, with an in-depth understanding of self, becoming the authors of their conditions. These individuals then use self-management strategies to produce self-determined behaviors, which respond to and increase psychological empowerment. Ultimately, Wehmeyer's self-determination as an educational component concludes with self-realization, or one's ability to interpret his or her behaviors to ensure they are indeed self-determined. In all, Wehmeyer's four essential self-determination components, which he did not necessarily describe as a developmental process, remind me of Maslow's (1943) widely publicized theory of human motivation and its five hierarchical needs. One may question the connection between Wehmeyer's four essential self-determination components and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Yet, can one progress to the next stage without satisfying the previous stage? There exist other commonalities, which I now discuss.

Autonomy and physiological needs. Wehmeyer's autonomy, which remains founded in self-awareness, a self-determined individual employs to begin controlling his or her education and destiny. His autonomy seems comparable to Maslow's physiological needs that he believed to be "the starting point for motivation" (p. 372). Maslow's physiological needs center around an individual's quest to satisfy basic survival needs, such as thirst or hunger. Wehmeyer's autonomy and Maslow's physiological needs essentially have nothing in common when perceived literally. Figuratively, both begin processes designed to reach a predetermined outcome and both begin with a basic understanding of self. For example, Wehmeyer's autonomy begins with a basic self-awareness of one's interests, strengths, and needs, while Maslow's physiological needs begin with a basic understanding that one thirsts or hungers.

Consider that the basic self-awareness a particular Black student maintained was the continuous awareness of him or her self as self-determined with a history of educating the world, though American society trained him or her that his to believe their his or her history began with slavery. What if this student hungered to be self-determined and control her or his education and destiny? What if this student personified Ronald Regan's "hunger for the right of self-determination" (as cited in Garrison, p. 38). According to Maslow, until this student satisfied this hunger, "all other needs may become simply non-existent . . . [thus, it would be] . . . fair to characterize the whole organism by saying simply that it is hungry, for consciousness is almost completely preempted by hunger" (Maslow, 1943, p. 373).

Who would care about a math exam when they hunger? For that matter, why would a Black student seek academic success in the European academic system many associate with their enslavement and subsequent oppression. Why would a Black student do such, while hungering to be self-determined and control his or her education and destiny? A Black student's educational shortcomings, which many perceive to be negative, might actually evolve from the student's quest to satisfy the basic need to be fed, full, whole, self-determined, and free. Until that Black student satisfies this hunger, education may be of no consequence. This is not to say that the Black student maintains a deficit, or lacks for anything. Maybe it says that the this student's all too often omitted and unspoken strength resides in his or her resilience to quench the hunger to be self-determined and control his or her education and destiny.

Might a Black student's awareness of his or her authentic self, which in many ways contradicts the slave society's misperception of her or him as an intellectually and

inherently inferior slave, illuminate Wehmeyer's autonomy and Maslow's physiological needs? Might this student's quest to act autonomously and satisfy a basic need manifest itself as the student's *hunger* to become self-determined, which then supersedes all other needs? Why do so many Black students fall prey to the burden of acting White in their attempts to control their education and destinies? When a Black student sets academic failure as a goal and accomplishes this goal, does not that student find a semblance of control in that she or he accomplished a goal and maintained control over her or his education and destiny? From this student's perspective, would she or he not have seemingly quenched her or his hunger to be self-determined and free to control her or his education and destiny? Remember Goff et al.'s (2007) educators who believed they encountered a prime example of a Black student enthralled amidst the burden of acting White and how the educators believed the Black male conveyed, "that he didn't have to do [educational tasks and] . . . that he was smart enough to realize that education was not important" (p. 139). What was he saying?

Self-regulation and safety. Becoming autonomous and satisfying one's hunger enables one to progress to the next stage, which exist as Wehmeyer's self-regulation and Maslow's safety. Now this may sound like a stretch, but think of it this way. Wehmeyer's self-regulation consists of the behaviors an individual uses to assume more control over his or her education and destiny. These self-management strategies, when used appropriately, position one to "examine their environments and their repertoires of responses for coping with those environments . . . [and] . . . make decisions about how to act" (Whitman, 1990, p. 373). Essentially, this self-regulation enables one to attain and maintain the safety contained in understanding and arranging one's reality and

understanding one's abilities to successfully manipulate this reality. In a real sense, this self-regulation becomes a process for organizing one's environment into a sense of stability, security, and control.

Maslow described safety needs in terms of an individual's need for "a safe, orderly, predictable, . . . [and] . . . organized world" (p. 378). Maslow's safety needs remain similar to Wehmeyer's self-regulation, as both hinge upon an individual's existence in a stable world and their abilities to influence and maneuver within this world. Wehmeyer's self-regulation entails individuals utilizing self-management strategies to create their "safe" and organized worlds, while Maslow's safety needs entail individuals developing the mechanisms necessary to make the unfamiliar familiar, such as purchasing insurance or establishing the religious beliefs that evolve from safety needs focused on developing one's existence into a "meaningful whole" (Maslow, 1943, p. 379).

In terms of a Black student, self-regulation and safety needs might equate to a coping mechanism the student employs to organize and make safe his or her world. For example, the student might use Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) camouflage or avoidance to navigate the burden of acting White. Remember, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) found Black students using coping mechanisms (self-regulation) to control their education and destinies, navigate the burden of acting White, and prevent bullying. Even if it came at their expense, might these students have actually used self-regulation to create safe environments where they felt some semblance of organization, stability, and control? This again is not to say that a Black student lacks anything. In fact, this might say a Black student might successfully use many self-regulatory processes to create a more

organized sensible reality that meets his or her safety needs. Besides, if there is a deficit, it might reside in researchers' insufficient explorations into a Black students' self-regulatory powers and how this silence might contribute to misunderstanding and disempowerment. As a result, these relatively silent explorations might then contribute to a Black student's inability to advance to the psychological empowerment that manifests esteem, for this student has yet to appropriately self-regulate and find safety.

Psychological empowerment and esteem. Becoming self-regulatory and safe enables one's progression to Wehmeyer's psychological empowerment, which I liken to Maslow's esteem needs. If one is sequentially considering Maslow's hierarchy of needs, one may notice my abstinence from Maslow's need for love. I do return to an individual's need for love, yet, at this point, I remind the reader that this is a loose interpretation and that there is no need to pontificate. Anyway, Wehmeyer described psychological empowerment as the self-efficacy needed to achieve a goal. Maslow described esteem needs in terms of things "all people in our society . . . desire" (Maslow, 1943, p. 381). He described esteem needs as a high evaluation of one's self, self-respect, strength, achievement, adequacy, confidence, importance, appreciation, independence, and freedom.

Wehmeyer's psychological empowerment and Maslow's esteem needs I believe remain bound by the internal attributes that come from satisfying the previous two stages and can come from no external source. In other words, to be psychologically empowered and have one's esteem needs met dictates that one has the self-awareness necessary to self-regulate and create a safe reality that increases the individual's beliefs in his or her abilities and self. As an aside, some might argue that importance and

appreciation emit from external sources, yet I remind those that one must first appreciate and find one's self important before outside perceptions become relevant. Anyway, at the core of Wehmeyer's psychological empowerment resides a belief in one's abilities to achieve and one's belief in one self. I equate these beliefs with Maslow's esteem needs in that both entail an understanding of one self so serene that it reaches acceptance. Thereby, I believe Wehmeyer's psychological empowerment and Maslow's esteem needs, once fulfilled, mirror self-acceptance.

In regards to a Black student, Wehmeyer's psychological empowerment and Maslow's esteem needs translate to the student's belief in him or her self to the point where he or she becomes that self-determined being he or she so hungered to become. In effect, psychological empowerment and having one's esteem needs met, equate to the Black student's empowerment, equality, and freedom, or as Maslow said, "satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to . . . feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and . . . thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, or weakness and of helplessness (p. 382).

Some might argue that the Black student remains mired in seeking to become psychologically empowered and satisfy his or her need for esteem. Others might argue that America used systematic practices to keep the Black student psychologically disempowered, which is to say inferior, weak, and helpless with their esteem needs unmet. Regardless of the position, what must it feel like to have this need unmet? What could be worse than being useless? Might a Black student's quest to be self-determined and control his or her education and destiny manifest from unsatisfied psychological empowerment and esteem needs. Here again, this demonstration has no purpose to

illuminate a deficit. This demonstration exists to convey the understanding that many Black students' academic concerns might manifest from their search to become psychologically empowered and meet their esteem needs, which is another way to say that many Black students might seek self-acceptance.

Self-realization and self-actualization. Becoming psychologically empowered and having one's esteem needs met, enables one to progress to Wehmeyer's self-realization and Maslow's self-actualization. Wehmeyer described self-realization as an individual's ability to interpret his or her behaviors to ensure that their behaviors and selves are self-determined. Maslow described self-actualization in terms of an individual being all that he or she is capable of being. Both individuals described these constructs as the culmination of their presentations, and believed these finales resulted from successfully satisfying the previous stages. For example, Wehmeyer advanced that self-realizing individuals use experience to collect self-knowledge and self-understanding, which also can be said for Maslow' self-actualization. The experience these self-realizing or self-actualized individuals use to accumulate self-knowledge and self-understanding develop from (a) the self-awareness gained when becoming autonomous and understanding how to satisfy basic physiological needs, (b) the self-awareness gained when self-regulating and organizing one's reality into the manageable condition one finds safe, and (c) the self-awareness gained from begin so psychologically empowered that one finds the esteem that contributes to self-acceptance. In a sense, Wehmeyer's self-realization and Maslow's self-actualization mirror a developmental learning processes.

Wehmeyer's self-determination as an educational outcome, a title that suggests learning, includes individuals learning, or becoming aware of their preferences, interests, and abilities. Once the individual acquires this self-awareness, he or she uses it to self-regulate. While self-regulating, individuals employ self-management strategies to assume more control over their experience, and specifically their educations and destinies. Here again, the individual learns, as problem solving exists as a self-management strategy and appropriate problem solving forces one to regulate one's expectations, choices, and actions in the pursuit of a desired outcome (Mithaug et al., 2003). Basically, problem solving forces one to adjust and adjustment is learning (Mithaug et al., 2003).

Wehmeyer's psychological empowerment, which advances from self-efficacious behaviors and beliefs, an individual acquires and strengthens from successfully achieving goals and, in the process, learning to more effectively and efficiently accomplish goals. As a result of self-efficacious behaviors and beliefs, an individual learns to believe in his or her abilities and to believe in him or her self. At this point in Wehmeyer's self-determination as an educational outcome, an individual has learned from being autonomous, self-regulated, and psychologically empowered unto a point where the individual is self-realizing and self-determined. Thus, in the processes of learning to be self-realized and self-determined, the individual learned about him or her self, which remains critical, for to be self-determined one must first know and value one self (Field & Hoffman, 1994).

Maslow's process to become self-actualized begins with an individual's basic understanding of his or her psychological needs, or for these purposes, her or him self.

This basic understanding might equate to simply understanding when to satisfy one's thirst or hunger, which supersedes all other needs. It may also equate to a Black student's hunger to be his or her authentic self-determined free self, which contradicts the slave society's misperception. Until the individual satisfies this hunger, in whatever form it presents itself, the individual does not progress to fulfilling safety needs. Safety needs include an orderly structured existence in which one finds the security that empowers and enables her or him to control her or his experience. Maslow's esteem needs, I described as a need for the acceptance that first emits from self. To accept one self is a process of first knowing and understanding one self. Again we discuss learning, because to *truly* know and understand one self requires that one learn one's authentic identity. After learning to accept one self, one can be self-actualized, which is to say that one can be one's true self and use the self-awareness gained from the process to maintain this identity and remain authentic, self-actualized, self-determined, and free.

Wehmeyer's four self-determination components, which result in self-realization, favorably compare with Maslow's hierarchy of needs that result in self-actualization, for both remain predicated on an individual's knowledge of self. Self-awareness remains fundamental in my demonstration framed around misperception and disempowerment as well, for the Black students' knowledge of self might present a key to addressing their special education overrepresentation, through their increased self-determination. Knowledge of self remains central for, while composing this demonstration, I learned. I learned to understand that many Black students' educational shortcomings might birth from exercises to be their self-determined authentic selves in a

flawed American educational system and society, which views their shortcomings as evidence of deficits, as opposed to strengths.

Question, what if one read a vignette about a student who demonstrated Wehmeyer's self-determination as an educational outcome and its four accompanying essential components? What if the vignette described the student as self-determined and illustrated the student's use of self-determined behaviors to achieve a desired outcome. What if in the vignette, one learned that the student, based on the self-awareness that reminded the student that he or she was not the perception most portrayed in American society and educational textbooks, set academic failure as a goal? What if the vignette described the student's employment of self-regulatory strategies to arrange a world, in which the student found safety in choosing academic failure as a means of remaining true to his or her understood identity? In response to the belief that an American education removed his or her authentic identity, what if the student employed self-regulatory strategies to contradict much of the American education that preached that education begat future success? What if the student employed self-regulatory strategies to be the author of his or her education and destiny? What if the student employed self-regulatory strategies to make academic failure a reality? What if one read the vignette to learn that the student returned from the process more self-realized? After reading this vignette, would one understand the self-determination underlying the student's academic failure? Would one understand the strength the student used to fail? Would one consider this student self-determined? Now, what if the student was Black?

Love. In respect to Maslow's love, I understand love to be the construct or emotion fueling Wehmeyer's self-determination as an educational outcome and

Maslow's needs hierarchy. Some, as did Spencer et al. (2001), suggest that self-hatred propels a students' purposeful academic underachievement. I, however, deviate form this perspective to a vantage point enabling me to see the self-love that might lead a Black student to purposeful academic failure. Sound strange? Consider that this student employed the self-determined behaviors, researchers praise, to achieve a desired outcome. This student's actions demonstrate a love that seeks to position the student where his or her self-awareness says he or she should be. Love, or the absence thereof, may not be the issue. Discussions about love may actually distract from understanding that the concern may actually lay in a Black student's initial self-awareness, which she or he uses to satisfy the hunger to be authentic, self-determined, and free.

Consider the following. What if a male had the self-awareness that he needed to urinate? What if his self-regulation led him to a restroom where he stood in front of a urinal and took the necessary measures to urinate in the urinal? Did the male use self-awareness to set a goal? Did the student use self-awareness to attain his goal by employing the behaviors that would enable him to achieve his goal? Were the male's behaviors autonomous, self-regulated, and psychologically empowered? Were the male's behaviors self-determined? Was the male self-determined? Now, consider this same male's self-awareness so skewed that he misperceived the sensation to defecate as the sensation to urinate. Still, did not the male demonstrate the self-determination necessary to achieve his goal of urinating in the urinal? Now ask yourself, was it skewed self-awareness that led him to *shit* on himself?

Might my use of the word "shit" be analogous to many Black students' self-awareness, self-determined pursuits, and their subsequent educational outcomes? Unto

the point of using the word, had I conveyed the position that many Black students demonstrate self-determination? Unto the point of using the word, had I conveyed that when viewed from a different perspective, it becomes understandable and believable that perceived Black student deficits might actually be strengths. After using the word, however, had I focused the attention on the word, or outcome, and not the student's demonstrated self-determination? Did my usage of the word so distract from the context that it resulted in an appalling outcome. Was my usage of the word so abnormal that it caused my position to go misunderstood? Accordingly, might we have so consumed ourselves with viewing a Black student's outcomes that we overlook the context that contributed to the outcome and, in the process, overlooked opportunities to understand a Black student's self-determination?

Another analogy considers a Global Positioning System (GPS) that began with an incorrect ending point. The driver, oblivious to the inaccurate information inputted into the GPS, follows the GPS's directions and performs the same behaviors as if the GPS were accurate. Upon arriving at the GPS's the final destination, the driver realizes that she is not at her desired outcome. What might she next do? Believing in herself and the GPS's abilities, she might review the data inputted into the GPS to uncover the inaccurate information. Rather than spend unnecessary time and energies degrading her initial attempts and outcome, she might carefully input new and accurate information into the GPS, which would then enable her to reach her desired destination.

I believe this analogy remains similar to the self-determined pursuits of many Black students. Many Black students, I believe, begin with the inaccurate self-awareness that leads them, to still act self-determined, but reach final destinations dictated by

external sources or destinations that bring them so close, yet so far from their desired destinations. The analogy, I believe also remains similar to the self-determined pursuits of numerous Black students, in that the analogy demonstrated the lady's belief in herself, the process she employed to reach her desired outcome, and her unwillingness to wallow in her initial failed outcome. These beliefs led her to revisit her initial procedures to find the inaccurate GPS information, which she adjusted to then reach her final destination. In other words, she employed self-determination's self-awareness, self-regulation, and psychological empowerment to become self-realizing. This analogy begs the question, what if we reviewed the Black students' initial self-awareness that contributes to their final destinations, rather than condemning their outcomes and basing our understanding of their self-determination on these condemned outcomes.

Summary. Now that I have operationalized self-determination and identified various self-determination definitions, I choose Wehmeyer and Field's (2007) self-determination, for it symbolizes the freedom to control one's education and destiny, which so many students, specifically Black students, seek. I chose this self-determination because I believe it entails and demonstrates a self-awareness concentrated learning process whereby Black students might become more self-determined. Now then, in keeping with the aforementioned theme of what I would do if I continued speaking to other researchers, I explore self-determination's history.

Self-determination's history. As a concept, self-determination has a diverse and expansive history spanning over 2, 369 years, which Walden (2002), who Gill believed delivered a most accurate self-determination historical perspective (personal communication, March, 20, 2008), traced through religion, philosophy, political science,

and psychology. As a term, self-determination has existed for over 289 years, with the same religious, philosophical, political, and psychological history as the concept (Walden, 2002). As an educational component, the term self-determination first appeared in 1969, but did not appear in educational literature until the early 1990s, though Nirje first used the term within disability literature in 1972 (Woods, 2008). I now present self-determination's evolution through the various disciplines to demonstrate its maturation from the belief that humans possessed the capacities, power, freedoms, and free will necessary to determine and control, to the greatest extent possible, their destinies.

Religion. Walden dated self-determination's literal historic appearance to Scott's (1699) *The Christian Life*. In the book, Scott discussed "agents, that have no free-will or principle of self-determination" (as cited in Walden, p. 12). Though this may be the first documented usage of the term self-determination, Walden believed Mencius alluded to the concept much earlier. Mencius (371-289 BC), who many historians consider to be one of the great Confucians, referred to a peoples' equality when advising kings on democratic practices predicated upon the will of the people (Simpklins & Simpklins, 2000). Thus, it appears Mencius first used the concept of self-determination and the 17th century's John Scott breathed life into the self-determination term.

Philosophy. Most self-determination researchers highlight philosophy's 18th century John Lock for first combining Mencius' concept with Scott's term (Walden, 2002). Locke combined the two when he said, "the ideals of men and self-determination appear to be connected . . . [and] men can determine themselves" (Locke,

1715, p. 293). Interestingly, Woods (2008) interpreted Locke to suggest that man's free will might result in punishment from God, in the afterlife, for "wrong" choices. Also, interesting is the fact that, though researchers identify Locke's merging Mencius' concept with Scotts' term as the birth of today's self-determination, many fail to mention two facts. First, many fail to mention that Locke developed his self-determination, which pertained to an individual's capacities to free will as they determined their destinies, explicitly for wealthy European adolescent males (Locke, 1715). Second, many fail to mention that America's slave society believed in Locke's self-determination as they "invoked natural law and the natural rights of man, drawing inspiration from the writings of John Locke" (Unterberger, 1996, p. 927).

Political science. Political science's macro–level self-determination refers to "the right of a people to determine their own political destiny" (Unterberger, 1996, p. 926). Walden (2002) credited the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte with "coining" the political phrase self-determination and believed Winston Churchill's (1949) *World Crisis* brought political self-determination to prominence, though Churchill discussed the term as nothing original or new. Walden acknowledged, as did Unterberger (1996), that political science's self-determination probably derived from nineteenth century German "radical" philosophers' frequent use of the term "selfstbestimmumrecht." These Germans' usage led to 1896's London International Socialist Congress's integration of the term self-determination into a resolution that declared "the full rights of the selfstbestimmumrecht (self-determination) of all nations" (Lenin, 1942, p. 42). In 1915, the Socialist Conference of Denmark, Holland, Norway, and Sweden called for the "recognition of the self-determination of nations"

(as cited in Unterberger, 1996, p. 926). Political science's self-determination reached America during the English colonies revolt, which Unterberger (1996) believed to be the "first assertion of the right of national . . . self-determination in the history of the world" (p. 927). Unterberger classified World War I as the "war of self-determination" (p. 929), considered it the moment when a nation's right to be self-determining, or free, became the "principle of national self-determination" (p. 926), and the moment when self-determination entered the forefront of international politics.

In regards to America's political self-determination, numerous prominent politicians used the term synonymously with a form of freedom (Woods, 2008). Orators such as James Madison, James Monroe, Woodrow Wilson, and Ronald Regan all referred to a nation's right to self-determination. President George H.W. Bush referred to a nation's self-determination, which he "rebaptized" as the New World Order (Unterberger, 1996). Thomas Jefferson, who Woods (2008) considered the most illustrious reflection of political self-determination, alluded to a nation's self-determination when he said, "every people may establish what form of government they please, and change it as they please, the will of the nation being the only thing essential" (as cited in Woods, 2008, p. 44). This self-determination, which most directly refers to a country or group's right to self-governance contributed to the Native American Self-Determination Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Disability Rights Movement (Wehmeyer, 1996; Woods, 2008).

George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, though apparently at opposing ends of the self-determination spectrum, best demonstrate America's political self-determination (Unterberger, 1996). Unterberger (1996) categorized Washington and

Lincoln's self-determination as a "conflict" and suggested that they pursued "diametrically opposite principles" (p. 929). She based her conclusion on the many historians who considered Washington the first to successfully war for the right to be self-determined and Lincoln's squelching of the Confederacy's attempted sovereignty as a successful war against the right to be self-determined. These two historical figures adequately echo the American political self-determination position by epitomizing the constant war for and against a nation's right to self-determine. For example, American history reflects the nation's war to have a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" (as cited in Unterberger, 1996, p. 929) and the nation's facilitation of other country's self-determination. American history also reflects the numerous instances when the nation itself sought to extinguish or failed to recognize the self-determination of its very own (Unterberger, 1996).

Psychology. Psychology's self-determination evolved from the writings of White (1959), Rotter (1966), de Charms (1968), and Harter (1978), who believed individuals could exercise control over their environments. Walden (2002) posited that these beliefs led psychologists to concentrate on self-determination as it related to the social conditions influencing human engagement, disengagement, and motivation. He suggested that psychology researchers focused on social conditions and human engagement and disengagement to better understand the "healthy" psychological development that might enable individuals to exert more control over their lives. Walden also suggested that these researchers focused on human motivation to better understand the self-regulation that might enable individuals to wield more control over their lives. Ryan and Deci (2000a), prominent self-determination psychologist,

understood competence, autonomy, and relatedness as three inherent psychological needs, which if unsatisfied, resulted in diminished self-motivation. Their research became the cornerstone of today's psychological self-determination's concentration on human motivation (Deci 1980; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Education. Walden (2002) believed self-determination first appeared in education 1969. He considered the Scandinavian's Normalization Movement as the bridge that merged self-determination's religious, philosophical, political, and psychological foundations with education. Walden posited that the Normalization Movement's advocacy, which remains a fundamental self-determination component (Ward, 1996), replaced Alarmist Protectionism. Alarmist Protectionism marks the period when society perceived individuals with disabilities as threats and routinely institutionalized and dehumanized these individuals (Walden, 2002). During this era, some communities even declared many individuals disabilities, without effective advocates, as wards of the state. In effect, these individuals became a state's property and responsibility, which replaced their responsibility for self with diminished self-advocacy skills and opportunities to employ self-advocacy. Thus, the Alarmist Protectionism era included the decreased self-advocacy of individuals with disabilities, which the Normalization Movement sought to increase.

The Normalization Movement, concentrated on the "ideology of human management" (Wolfensberger et al., 1972, p. 27), sought the inclusion of individuals with disabilities. Bank-Mikkelsen and Nirje championed normalization and the struggle for the increased self-determination of institutionalized, or recently deinstitutionalized,

individuals with disabilities. Wolfensberger et al. (1972) credited Bank-Mikkelsen, the head of a Danish Mental Retardation service provider, with first disseminating normalization. Bank-Mikkelsen (1980) believed normalization to be a condition that enabled individuals with MR to live as normal as possible and advocated for normalization's inclusion into laws that might regulate services received by persons with MR. Nirje, at the time the executive director of the Swedish Association for Retarded Children, defined normalization as "making available to the mentally retarded patterns and conditions of everyday life which are as close as possible to the norms and patterns of the mainstream of society" (Nirje, 1994, p. 19). He based his definition on the belief that society devalued individuals with disabilities, and, as a result, depreciated these individuals' self-worth and self-advocacy, which contributed to identity problems. Nirje posited that self-determination might enable these individuals to control their education and lives to the greatest extent possible and counter society' s devaluation of their normalcy and selves.

Resulting from Bank-Mikkelsen and Nirje's actions, Wolfensberger, et al. (1972) defined normalization as the "utilization of means which are as culturally normative as possible, in order to establish and or maintain personal behaviors and characteristics which are as culturally normative as possible" (p. 28). Wolfensberger, et al.'s normalization asserted that services provided to individuals with disabilities be specific to the individual. In other words, no specific definition of normalcy need exist. They believed that statistical analysis, and not morality, must define normalcy. Thereby, service providers had not the responsibility to make individuals with disabilities normal. Rather, they had the responsibility to develop individualized

services that enabled these individuals to, as statistically defined, live and be as normal as possible. Walden credited this definition as the first to include culturally specific language in the attempts to globalize the normalization principle.

Wolfensberger et al. advanced from Alarmist Protectionism and institutionalization to a concentrated focus on human treatment, which contributed to an advocacy focus. Their advocacy focus resulted in Citizen Advocacy, which concentrated on needs specific to an individual. As of the 1980s, this focus led away from a systems oriented delivery method to empowering individuals with disabilities to be the authors of their own lives, which resulted in person-centered planning. Person-centered planning contributed to the 1990s Self-Advocacy Movement and its position that individuals with disabilities possessed the capacities to identify and state their needs and rights.

In response to The Self-Advocacy Movement's self-regulation, researchers became interested in self-regulation, for they perceived to be a fundamental element in an individual's control over his or her education and life (Walden, 2002). Walden also posited that researchers viewed self-regulation's absence in students with disabilities as a "major problem" (p. 21). Through the research efforts of individuals such as Agran (1997), Martin and Marshall (1995), Mthaug et al. (1988), and Wehmeyer et al. (1998), special education literature came to regard self-regulation as a fundamental element in the movement to empower students with disabilities to assume control over their education and lives. They emphasized self-regulation, for self-regulatory behaviors provide the means for individuals to control their experience and enable students to

assume responsibility for their condition, which contributes to empowerment (Graham, Harris, & Reid, 1992). Thus, self-determination became an educational commodity.

Summary. It appears that today's educational self-determination emerged from religion, philosophy, political science, and psychology. It also appears that this self-determination emerged from two prevailing sources. First, discussions about the global initiatives that sought the normalcy of individuals with disabilities seem to abound in virtually all educational self-determination annals, and thereby suggest the Normalcy Movement's major impacts on our understanding of what is normal for individuals with disabilities and how self-determination develops this normalcy. Locke's combination of the self-determination construct with the term also seems central to today's educational self-determination. Locke's self-determination contribution resides in his position that man possessed the capacities and free will to self-determine and uses choice to control his experience. Thus, it appears that today's educational self-determination includes a history of using choice to be normal.

Ward's (1996) personal reflections on self-determination's history. Ward (1996) provided a similar, yet personal, accounting of self-determination's history. Ward's lived experiences as an individual with a disability provided him a vantage point that I find sensitive, sincere, and necessary when recounting self-determination's historic rise to what Wehmeyer (1996) believed many contemporary disability service providers perceive and employ as the latest "buzzword." Ward's account illuminates attitudinal change and the social movements that facilitated the installation and maturation of today's self-determination. I share Wards self-determination history

because it reflects a phenomenological expression that deviates from the typical and enables one to experience an insider's perspective.

Ward opened his accounting with a discussion about how many perceived the "inferior" status of individuals with disabilities as an inevitable consequence of their disability. He continued to discuss societal images of individuals with disabilities and how these images illustrated societal perceptions. Ward presented Tiny Tim as one to be pitied, Ironside as heroic despite his disability, Captain Hook as evil in response to his physical disability, and the denial of the United States President Franklin Roosevelt's disability. He used these images to advance that American society did not represent nor appreciate individuals with disabilities as "valued, contributing, average, capable, and loving members of society" (p. 4). Ward's demonstration encapsulated an American history filled with the inhospitable attitudes towards individuals with disabilities and highlighted America's perceptions, attitudes, and history that led the society, from the 1920s to the 1970s, to institutionalize individuals with disabilities. He discussed this purposeful institutionalization as dehumanization and segregation, which he described as paternalistic emasculating ventures that eroded self-initiative and self-respect.

Ward then proceeded into a discussion about denied educational access, which he framed around America's denial of formal education to Black students. He suggested that American society purposefully did not educate individuals occupying the lowest economical rungs and "subservient" peoples. Ward considered this denial of education a purposed attempt to keep certain individuals ignorant and lacking the abilities to read and make and understand comparisons between themselves and

individuals occupying America's upper economical rungs. He found this perpetuated ignorance beneficial to those positioned atop America's socioeconomical ladder because it decreased advocacy skills and opportunities of those situated at the spectrum's lower end, which kept them subservient. He found this purposefully perpetuated ignorance a necessity in an American society seeking to maintain its social order.

Ward intimated that he would like to believe that the educational denial resulted from American society's ignorance as to the benefits education provided students with disabilities. Yet, from his perspective, the denial may have resulted from "benign neglect." Ward then discussed the denial of education in terms of the parent response, which included parents advocating for educational access across educational settings and an overall improved quality of education for their children. He suggested that these parents' monumental influence led to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and its guaranteed free appropriate public education for students with disabilities. More than that, Ward believed these parents and their advocacy facilitated a change in the societal attitudes that founded the denial of formal education to individuals with disabilities.

Ward then discussed the Independent Living and Disability Rights Movements, which he believed also changed societal attitudes. He explained that the Civil Rights Movement "strongly influenced" both the Independent Living and Disability Rights Movements, for individuals with disabilities identified with the Black community's struggle for independence, integration, equality, and self-determination. Ward further confided that individuals with disabilities gathered concepts, tactics, and especially

strength from the Civil Rights Movement, and in response, organized. In particular, he believed their organization centered on the realization that, as a splintered group, they had diminished value and power. Ward believed the Independent Living and Disability Rights Movements, which concentrated on independence and meaningful equality of opportunity, resulted in a more unified, purposed, and independent group of individuals with disabilities. The attitudinal change that resulted from these two movements, Ward articulated as one that focused more on individuals with disabilities, rather than the remainder of American society. He believed that these two movements, accompanied by individuals with disabilities realizations that others struggled against similar "barriers," fostered a collective identity he characterized as "one for all and all for one" (Ward, 1996, p. 7). Ward further articulated that this collective identity fostered increased self-determination and opportunities to demonstrate self-determination.

Finally, Ward acknowledged the Self-Advocacy Movement's role in installing and maturing self-determination through attitudinal change and considered it the movement that developed today's self-determination. He acknowledged that the Self-Advocacy Movement birthed from the Civil Rights Movement and individuals with disabilities revolt against American society's perception of them as inferior. Ward consulted Lehr and Taylor's (1986) self-advocacy definition, to define self-advocacy in terms of an individual being able to

> speak for [him or her self], to make decisions for [him or her self], to know what [his or her] rights are and how to stick up for [him or her self] when [his or her] rights are being violated or diminished. It also means being able to help others who cannot speak for themselves. (p. 3)

Ward (1996) believed the Self-Advocacy Movement contributed to the self-advocacy groups that enabled individuals with disabilities to "learn how to support one another and to help one another become active participants in decisions that affect their lives" (p. 8). He suggested that this movement facilitated for individuals with disabilities to successfully advocate for basic civil rights. In effect, Ward believed the Self-Advocacy Movement educated American society and diminished prejudices and the numerous discriminatory acts perpetrated against individuals with disabilities.

Summary. Experiencing Ward's reflection, I hope enables one to better understand self-determination's storied history. I hope one better understands that self-determination's history includes the research and social movements that facilitated and demonstrated the self-determination of individuals with disabilities and changed American society's perceptions, attitudes, and history. I hope one better understands that self-determination's history includes the self-determined acts of both individuals with and without disabilities. I hope one better understands how this process included individuals with disabilities developing their very own identity. I hope one better understands that the oppressed must "liberate themselves" and any process of liberation that excludes them relegates them to "objects which must be saved" and transforms them into a disenfranchised and disempowered mass to be manipulated (Freire, 1970). I hope one better understands Ward's reflection and his conveyance that today's self-determination was not given. I hope one better understands that individuals with disabilities revolutionarily earned their right to self-determine. I hope one better understands that "freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift" (Freire, 2000, p. 47). I hope one better understands Ward's direct foreshadowing of what needs to happen for

Black students, the Black community, and American society, experiencing special education overrepresentation.

Self-Determined Learning Theory. I have now operationalized self-determination, identified its various definitions, and presented its history. In the process, I chose the self-determination I believe best to empower Black students. I now present its self-determined learning theory. Before discussing the Self-Determined Learning Theory (SDLT), I do two things. First, I acknowledge the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which Pintrich and Schunk (2002) considered the most researched and empirically supported theory of human motivation and a primary self-determination theory. Though the SDLT and SDT, the two prevailing self-determination theories, remain "comparable" (Sylvester, 2010), differentiating between the two seems appropriate. Second, I provide context to the SDLT's development, which I believe facilitates my SDLT discussion.

The Self-Determination Theory. The SDT, which emphasizes human motivation, personality development, and self-regulation (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997), remains "framed in terms of social and environmental factors that facilitate versus undermine intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000b, p. 70). The SDT's developers, dubbed the "Rochester School" because at one point Deci, Ryan, Connell, and Skinner were all colleagues at The University of Rochester, emphasized intrinsic motivation because they believed it led to mastery (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Thus, the SDT exists as a human motivation approach concentrating on personality development and self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

The SDT defines self-determination from an individual's will or, "capacity of the

human organism to choose how to satisfy its needs" (Deci, 1980, p. 26). Deci (1980) defined self-determination as "the process of utilizing one' will" (p. 26). Thereby, the SDT links will and self-determination as it concludes that self-determined persons (a) understand and accept their strengths and limitations, (b) are aware of influences upon themselves, (c) make choices, and (d) determine how to meet their needs (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). In essence, the SDT posits that self-determined individuals choose their actions based on environment and needs. Therefore, choice remains a central SDT component (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The SDT's history includes its response to Skinner (1953) and Hull's (1943) persuasive and empirically founded behavioral theories that considered all human behavior motivated. Skinner believed rewards motivated all human behavior, even if the activity itself represented the reward. Hull believed all human behavior to be motivated as well, though he differed from Skinner in his belief that psychological needs represented the motivation. Resulting from Skinner and Hull's efforts, the Rochester School began exploring intrinsic motivation's satisfaction of an individual's basic psychological needs, which Deci and Ryan (1985, 1991) identified as competence, autonomy, and relatedness. They described competence in terms of an individual's basic psychological need to "feel" that he or she can successfully interact with his or her environment, which includes interacting with others. From an evolutionary perspective, Pintrich and Schunk (2002) believed an organism's abilities, or inabilities, to competently navigate its environment determine its survival. Deci and Ryan (1985) discussed autonomy in relation to an individual's internal perceived locus of causality, or feelings of control. They distinguished autonomy as paramount because individuals

must "experience their behavior to be self-determined" (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p. 58). They described relatedness as an individual's need for belongingness. Together, they believed these three basic psychological needs founded human behavior.

The Rochester School's self-determination development included the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), which exists as a SDT subtheory. Deci and Ryan's (1985) CET concentrated on the social contextual factors influencing intrinsic motivation and recognized only a "subset" of human behavior to be intrinsically motivated. They developed the CET to "explain the intrinsic motivation side of human behavior" (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 258). The CET posited that intrinsic motivation led individuals to find and "master" the challenges that then contribute to increased competence and self-determination (Deci & Porac, 1978). The CET also posited that autonomy accompanied increased competence because an individual must experience internal perceived locus of causality (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). In other words, to be self-determined an individual must believe and experience her or his behavior and self as self-determined, which mandates satisfying her or his basic need for competency and autonomy.

The SDT hinges on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000a) defined intrinsic motivation in terms of an individual "doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable" (p. 55). Deci (1980) defined it as "the human need to be competent and self-determining" (p. 27). Together, they characterized intrinsic motivation as an individual's willful act (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Ryan and Deci (2000a) characterized a student who engages in an activity, whereby the student's engagement represents the reward, as intrinsically motivated. They defined extrinsic

motivation in terms of an individual doing something to gain a "separable" outcome. In other words, extrinsic motivation stems from an individual's attempts to acquire a reward or avoid a "sanction." They characterized a student who completes a homework assignment to gain or avoid consequences from his or her parents as extrinsically motivated because the student acts in response to an external source. The SDT posits that extrinsic motivation led to decreased intrinsic motivation and self-determination (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

The Rochester School believed the SDT to be important and necessary, for they did not believe educators only encountered intrinsically motivated students. Thus, they believed educators needed to understand both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated students in order to educate all students (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Ryan and Deci (2000b) further posited the SDT's worth to parents, educators, employers, psychotherapist, health professionals, because they believed it enabled these individuals to facilitate (a) "positive" motivation, (b) enhanced performance, (c) well-being, (d) the assimilation of information (e) behavioral regulations, (f) commitment, (g) maintained change, and (h) the ability to differentiate between alienation and engagement. More than that, they believed the SDT's motivation focus fostered human achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Context to the SDLT. The SDLT exists as a response to tenets maintained within Operant Theory (Mithaug et al., 2007). Operant Theory (OT) maintains that "discriminative stimuli provoke new responses and when reinforcing stimuli follow, future responding to those events is likely" (Mithaug et al., 2007, p. 5). OT presents (a) informational cues designed to elicit the appropriate response, (b) immediate

reinforcement of both appropriate and inappropriate responses, and (c) continuous monitoring of the student's response rate to assess learning. In other words, OT concentrates on direct instruction. Mithaug et al. (2007) believed OT's direct instruction glorified and prescribed teacher control of all components of a student's learning. They suggested that direct instruction's sustained use may be accredited to the researchers, educational institutions, educators, school administrators, and school psychologists who use it (a) for teacher preparation, (b) for special education referral, (c) to demonstrate a program's effectiveness, and (d) to address assessment, instruction, student referral, and research concerns. In all, Mithaug et al. (2007) considered OT's direct instruction outdated.

In response to the OT's direct instruction, Mithaug et al. (2003) developed the SDLT. They believed the SDLT identified the conditions that prompt individuals, with or without disabilities and regardless of the amount of melanin contained in the individual's skin, to engage in learning. They designed the SDLT with self-instruction's prescription of student controlled adjustments, or exploratory learning, because they believed motivated students "adapt to challenging opportunities" (Mithaug et al., 2003, p. 5). Mithaug et al. based the SDLT on self-instructional tenets because they believed that self-engagement maximized learning, which they defined as "an adaptation to a new circumstance" (Mithaug et al., 2003, p.13) and referred to as "meaningful."

The SDLT. The SDLT concentrates on opportunity, engagement, and adjustment to foster learning because its developers believed (a) when learners find an opportunity valuable, manageable, and doable, they engage, (b) engagement leads the individual to adjust their expectations, choices, and actions to produce a desired outcome, and (c) the

adjustment, or modifications, of expectations, choices, beliefs, and actions equate to learning (Mithaug, 2003). Agran and Wehmeyer (2000) explained the opportunity, engagement, and adjustment relationship in terms of a student (a) setting goals based on self-awareness, (b) then developing and implementing a plan to achieve the goal, (c) then self-evaluating their progression towards the goal and, in the process, adjusting their goal or plan as necessary. The adjustment becomes learning. In other words, when an individual deems an experience to hold value and believe they can complete its associated events, the individual engages and their engagement leads to the self-regulation that equates to learning.

Mithaug et al. explored the opportunity, engagement, and adjustment relationships in the SDLT's four primary propositions, when they said,

> the closer to optimal the opportunity for experiencing gain, the more likely is the regulation of expectations, choices, and actions to produce gain. (b) The more often the regulation of expectations, choices, and actions to produce gain, the more likely it is that adjustments optimize as expectations, choices, actions, and results become adaptive, rational, efficient, and successful. (c) The closer to optimal the adjustment to an opportunity, the more persistent the engagement to produce gain, the greater is the feeling of control over gain production, and the closer to maximum is the learning from that adaptation. (d) Therefore, the closer to optimal the opportunities for experiencing gain, the more persistent is the engagement, the greater is the sense of control, and the closer to maximum is the learning. (p. 14)

Hence, when an individual determines an opportunity valuable and doable, the individual engages in response to challenges to his or her beliefs. Belief remains a SDLT staple because "beliefs affect learning by influencing engagement" (Mithaug et al., 2003, p. 21). Mithaug et al. (2003) articulated that an individual's beliefs, which interpret information, cause either action or inaction. The SDLT presumes that when one understands the cause of an event and determines that one needs to act to "protect an interest," the individual engages. Put another way, when an individual believes action or inaction will produce a specific outcome, they either act or do not act. Once engaged, the individual uses self-regulatory strategies to modify his or her beliefs. Mithaug et al. (2003) identified this self-regulation in terms of its two primary effects. First, they identified the self-regulation that occurs when an individual understands what to expect, based on experiential knowledge, as not producing "new learning" because the individual experiences "a previously learned pattern of self-regulation" (Mithaug et al., 2003, p. 24). The second self-regulatory effect occurs when an individual engages but does not "know" what to expect, or as Mithaug et al. (2003) said, "when their beliefs are inconsistent with their circumstances (p. 24). In this event, the individual's engagement results in a "different pattern of responding and therefore yields new learning (Mithaug et al., 2003, p. 25). Lastly, the individual's engagement, which evolves from the self-regulation that causes modifications to one's experience, behaviors, and beliefs, results in adjustment. Thus, adjustment, or learning, results from modification (Mithaug et al. 2003). Put another way, "learning occurs when unusual circumstances provoke learners to change . . . the adjustment that results from that change attempt is what they learn (Mithaug et al., 2007, p. 8).

I have now explained Mithaug et al.'s SDLT and in the process explored the relationship between opportunity, engagement, and adjustment. It took a rather lengthy paragraph to complete the description, whereas it took Mithaug et al. (2003) a mere 73 words to make the presentation. They said,

> when a circumstance offers a valuable and manageable opportunity for gain, they [individuals] engage it by regulating their expectations, choices, and actions to produce a result that yields a satisfactory change in circumstances—usually a gain towards some end. This in turn produces an experience of control over the circumstance that positively affects subsequent beliefs about the opportunities for gain in that situation. This is how opportunities affect engagement and how engagement affects adjustment. (p. 19)

Summary. Presently, there exist two major theories of self-determined learning. The Rochester School's SDT, and its human motivation centered processes, concentrates on an individual's choice in regards to environment and needs. The SDT advances that psychological needs found human motivation, and thus, it emphasizes an individual's psychological need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The SDT's primary focus resides in intrinsic motivation because its developers believed this motivation produced "high quality learning and creativity" (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p. 55). The SDLT concentrates on opportunity, engagement, and adjustment in its attempts to foster meaningful learning. Its developers posited that these three constructs work together to produce self-engagement and meaningful learning. The SDLT advances that, when an individual finds an unfamiliar event valuable and doable, they engage. The

individual's engagement results in the self-regulation of expectations, experience, behaviors, and beliefs, which equates to new and meaningful learning. Together these two theories concentrate on self-instruction, self-engagement, and choice, for both find these three practices most beneficial to an individual's learning and self-determination.

Increasing a student's self-determination. Konrad et al. (2007) conducted what they considered the first examination of the effects of self-determination interventions. Their meta-analysis concentrated exclusively on interventions designed to increase the academic performance and self-determination levels of students with a LD and/or an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). They focused on academic performance and self-determination, for they considered them required educational components of an educator's instruction to students with disabilities (Konrad et al. 2007). They focused on students with a LD and/or an ADHD because they considered these two disability categories' postschool outcomes "unacceptable." Their meta-analysis did not include interventions specific to a content area, as to ensure that they reviewed self-determination interventions and not interventions concentrating on explicit instruction in an academic content area.

Konrad et al.'s (2007) efforts revealed that researchers most often focused on self-management self-determination interventions. Next, researchers most often examined interventions concentrating on self-determination and at least one other self-determination behavior (i.e., decision-making, self-awareness, independent performance, etc.), then goal setting and self-advocacy self-determination interventions. Eventually, they found self-management interventions that included goal setting to be the best for increasing academic productivity, which Konrad et al. (2007) considered

crucial because it contributed to (a) the exhibition of expected classroom behavior, (b) feedback, (c) improved GPAs in response to increased engagement, and (d) self-engagement. Though they found self-determination interventions focused on self-management and goal setting most effective, they also found that "self-determination interventions can only increase behaviors that are already in students' repertoires" (Konrad et al. 2007, p. 111). Thereby, they recommended a combination of strategies and direct instruction embedded with self-determination. Thus, it appears that the best method for increasing a student's self-determination resides in interventions focused on self-management and goal setting administered via a variety of teaching strategies including direct instruction. However, educators should remain cognizant of student self-engagement, and thereby, use direct instruction to convey specific instruction while still facilitating exploratory learning, or Mithaug et al.'s (2003) meaningful learning.

There exist numerous interventions encompassing Konrad et al.'s (2007) self-management and goal setting. For my purposes, I choose to explore Martin and Marshall's (1995) *Choice Maker* because it incorporates the seven behaviors I believe equate to a developmental learning process. The learning process I consider as one that teaches individuals to learn how to learn, and more significant to Black students, it teaches one to learn about self. My purpose, still resides in empowerment and I present the Choice Maker as a means of increasing the self-awareness that encourages the Black student's empowerment. Before conducting this discussion, I describe the Choice Maker curriculum.

Choice Maker. Martin and Marshall's (1995) Choice Maker exists as a self-determination intervention centered on self-management, goal setting and goal

attainment. Martin and Marshall developed the Choice Maker curriculum, which includes *Choosing Goals, Expressing Goals,* and *Take Action* to teach students, with or without a disabilities and regardless of skin color, to (a) envision their future, (b) determine a course of action and the time necessary to realize their vision, and (c) identify the feedback necessary to determine if they achieved their goal (Martin & Marshall, 1996). *Choosing Goals,* which includes self-awareness and decision-making, entails students identifying interests, skill, limits, and goals and developing a plan. *Expressing Goals,* which includes self-advocacy, happens to be the only section devoted strictly to students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), instructs students to lead their IEP meetings while assertively and appropriately stating their wants, needs, and rights (Martin & Marshall, 1995). *Take Action*, which includes independent performance, self-evaluation, and adjustment, entails students performing to accomplish their goal, evaluating their progress, and making any necessary adjustments. The curriculum pivots on the self-awareness and decision-making an individual needs and uses to choose goals based on interests, skills, and limits and develop a plan to attain his or her goal. After choosing a goal, the individual learns to obtain support through self-advocating, which entails expressing needs and goals. Next, the individual takes action by using self-management strategies to complete their plan, independently performing the activities necessary to achieve their plan, self-evaluating their progress, and adjusting, which may include modifications to the goal, plan, and/or their Take Action process.

Martin and Marshall (1996), when socially validating the Choice Maker curriculum, conducted an "extensive" literature review, interviews, and a focus group.

They also developed the curriculum matrix, which included the self-determination concepts that parents, adults with disabilities, and transition focused academicians validated. In this process, Martin and Marshall (1996) became aware of 37 self-determination constructs, which they grouped into seven specific domains. The seven domains include (a) self-awareness, (b) self-advocacy, (c) self-efficacy, (d) decision making, (e) independent performance, (f) self-evaluation, and (g) adjustment. I now explore each domain, which I refer to as six behaviors and an artifact. Exploring each domain facilitates my discussion of the Choice Maker as a developmental learning process that teaches one how to learn and how to learn about self.

Self-awareness. The Choice Maker first introduces self-awareness, which encompasses the self-determination constructs associated with an individual identifying and understanding their interests, skills, limits, and values (Martin & Marshall, 1996). Self-awareness as a Choice Maker curriculum component resides in the Choosing Goals section, in which the student indentifies his or her interests, skills, and limits associated with school, employment, postschool education, personal matters, independent living, and community participation (Martin & Marshall, 1996). Self-awareness remains central to the Choice Maker curriculum because it enables students to better understand their interest, skills, and limits needed to set a goal. As well, self-awareness seems central to all self-determination discussions, for being self-determined requires an individual to know and value him or her self (Field & Hoffman, 1994), which Wehmeyer and Schalock (2001) considered as a realization that comes from experience. Goff (2006) believed self-awareness remained so central because it equated

to the first step in an individual's self-realization, self-actualization, and self-determination, which all begin with knowing and understanding self (Goff, 2006).

Decision-making. The Choice Maker curriculum's decision-making encompasses the self-determination constructs associated with (a) assessing situational demands, (b) goal setting, (c) setting standards, (d) identifying information necessary to make decisions, (e) considering past experiences, (d) generating new creative solutions, (e) considering options, (f) choosing the best option, and (g) developing a plan. Decision-making as a Choice Maker curriculum component resides in the Choosing Goals section (Martin & Marshall, 1996). Essentially, the Choice Maker's decision-making process involves students developing a plan to achieve their goal and practicing and enhancing their decision-making skills, which remains critical because students learn best and most when provided opportunities to make decisions (Mithaug et al., 2003).

Marshall et al. (1999) considered decision-making a five-step process conducted throughout the Choice Maker process. They believed individuals first set a goal. Second, the individual develops a plan to accomplish their goal. Third, the individual implements their plan. Fourth, the individual evaluates their progress, or lack thereof, towards accomplishing their goal. Finally, the individual, based on the information gained while evaluating, makes the necessary adjustments to his or her goal or plan. Hence, it appears decision-making entails a multistep process performed throughout the Choice Maker's three sections and begins with a student's identified desired outcome, or goal. Decision-making continues, as the individual develops a plan to achieve a desired outcome. Next, the individual engages, implements, and works to achieve their

desired outcome. The individual then evaluates his or her progress, which leads to adjustments.

Self-advocacy. The Choice Maker's self-advocacy encompasses the self-determination constructs associated with (a) assertively stating wants and needs, (b) determining, pursuing, obtaining, and evaluating needed supports, and (c) conducting one's own "affairs" (Martin & Marshall, 1996). Self-advocacy as a Choice Maker curriculum component resides in the Expressing Goals section and specifically pertains to students leading their IEP meetings. Choice Maker's self-advocacy instruction includes an 11-step process that teaches students to lead their IEP meeting through practices such as (a) beginning the IEP meeting, (b) stating the meeting's purpose, (c) introducing IEP team members, and (d) asking questions for clarification. Essentially, this self-advocacy instruction teaches students to not only be active IEP team members, but also be the authors of their condition by practicing the self-advocacy that facilitates future success. Self-advocating becomes critical in that it results in enhanced self-advocacy skills, which remain pivotal because individuals who achieved positive outcomes used self-advocacy to attain outcomes (Turner, 1995). Self-advocacy also remains central because these skills enable individuals to control their destinies (Wehmeyer et al., 2000). Just as important to the Black student, self-advocacy skills enable individuals to change their circumstance (Wehmeyer et al., 2000).

Independent performance. The Choice Maker curriculum's independent performance encompasses the self-determination constructs associated with (a) initiating and completing a task on time, (b) using self-management strategies, (c) identifying and adhering to a set standard, and (d) following-through on one's plan

(Martin & Marshall, 1996). Independent performance as a Choice Maker curriculum component resides in the Take Action section and exists to enable students to develop a plan. The Choice Maker's plan creation entails six steps. First, students identify and write a long-term goal. Second, students "breakdown" the long-term goal into a more manageable short-term goal. Third, students create a plan. The Choice Maker curriculum provides a worksheet (see Appendix A for Take Action page 1) where students develop plans by identifying six planning components (i.e., standard, motivation, strategy, schedule, supports, and feedback). Fourth, students, act to complete their plans and achieve their goals, while adhering to their plans. Fifth, students self-evaluate, or determine if they achieved their goal. Last, students adjust as needed. Independent performance's significance dwells in it abilities to, with the appropriate fading of direct instruction, facilitates for students to assume the responsibilities of understanding what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. While independently performing, students not only understand these three areas, but also do them. Benefits to parents, educators, and service providers reside in having students in control, which decreases their responsibilities to control the student's life.

Self-evaluation. The Choice Maker curriculum's self-evaluation encompasses the self-determination constructs associated with (a) self-monitoring, (b) comparing performance to set standard, (c) self-evaluation, and (d) determining if one completed one's plan and achieved one's goal (Martin & Marshall, 1996). Self-evaluation as a Choice Maker curriculum component resides in the Take Action section and exists to enable students to decide if they completed their Take Action process, satisfied their plans, and achieved their goals. Agran (1997) alluded to self-evaluation as a self-

regulatory strategy that included goal setting, planning, problem-solving, and observational leaning strategies that one must learn before becoming self-determined. Thus, self-evaluation remains a critical self-determination behavior, which the Choice Maker enables students to practice.

The Choice Maker curriculum includes a self-evaluation worksheet (see Appendix B for Take Action page 2), where students determine if they met their short-term goal. To do so, the worksheet asks students to answer "yes" or "no" if they adhered to their plans in terms of their predetermined standard, motivation, strategy, schedule, support, and feedback. The worksheet then asks student to answer "yes" or "no" in regards to the appropriateness of their standard, motivation, strategy, schedule, supports, and feedback. Lastly, the worksheet asks students "why or why not" they considered their standard, motivation, strategy, schedule, supports, and feedback appropriate. Students then, depending on their responses, adjust.

Adjustment. The Choice Maker curriculum's adjustment encompasses the self-determination constructs associated with (a) changing goals, standards, plans, strategies, supports, (b) persistent adjustment, and (c) use of feedback (Martin & Marshall, 1996). Adjustment as a Choice Maker curriculum component resides in the Take Action section and facilitates for students to revise their Take Action process, plan, and/or goal. Eventually, adjustment equates to learning, as students learn from changes to their Take Action process, plan, and/or goal (Mithaug et al., 2007). Adjustment also enables students to regulate expectations, choices, and actions in response to the wisdom gained from becoming more self-aware and practicing decision-making, self-advocating, independently performing, and self-evaluating. The

Choice Maker's aforementioned self-evaluation worksheet also asks students to consult why they believed they received their results. The worksheet then asks students to revise and adjust their plans and make the changes necessary to the future fulfillment of their Take Action process, plan, and goal. In other words, it asks students to adjust and learn from their adjustments, which remains significant because adjusting cultivates a sense of control and the more an individual adjusts, the more that individual learns (Mithaug et al., 2003).

Self-efficacy. The Choice Maker curriculum's self-efficacy encompasses the self-determination construct associated with expecting to obtain a goal (Martin & Marshall, 1996). Self-efficacy as a Choice Maker curriculum component resides more as an artifact of the Take Action process and facilitates a student's beliefs in his or her capacities to successfully repeat the Take Action process and accomplish a goal (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1991). Self-efficacy also facilitates a student's beliefs in his or her capacities to be self-determined and in control of their education and destiny. Self-efficacious beliefs and behaviors remain central to being self-determined because students exhibiting these beliefs and behaviors seldom act in ways that produce undesired outcomes because they work harder and persevere throughout the goal setting and goal attaining process (Bandura, 1997).

Choice Maker as a developmental process. Now that I have presented the Choice Maker's three sections and its associated six behaviors and artifact, I now discuss how these behaviors and artifact become a developmental learning process that might enable a student, specifically a Black student, to learn how to learn and learn about self. I do so while transposing self-advocacy and decision-making. I begin with

self-awareness, which equates to the self-knowledge gained from exploring one's identity. Many Black students, as I have demonstrated, seems to seek and need a more enhanced and authentic sense of self, which might enable them to truly understand that they are not that inferior being misperceived by America's slave society. In other words, many Black students might benefit from understanding that they are not and were never slaves, though their ancestors were enslaved. Next, self-advocacy, which entails appropriately stating one's wants, needs, and rights, I believe begins first with appropriately stating one's wants, needs, and rights to self. In regards to the Black student, this might enable many to have that internal dialogue, in which they acknowledge, to self, their authentic identities and state, to self, their needs, limits, and rights in order to be the authentic self.

With decision-making comes another internal dialogue, where the Black student might use strategies to develop the plan and goal to realize the vision of living authentically. More to the point, this might become the process whereby the Black student determines his or her authentic identity and how to be that individual. While independently performing, the Black student actually lives authentically, which hopefully satisfies their plans and goals and enables them to realize their visions. Self-evaluation facilitates for the Black student to constantly use self-management strategies to ensure that they live authentically. Then adjustment enables the Black student to make any necessary modifications within the entire process and to themselves. Finally, self-efficacy, which the Black student might demonstrate as the empowerment needed to repeat the ChoiceMaker process.

These internal procedures actually educate the Black student about self, for they enable the Black student to be in a perpetual state of self-exploration. In a real sense, this developmental learning process exists as a practice to gain self-knowledge. It begins with a basic understanding of self that propels the student through a series of self-exploratory exercises that conclude with the student determining if the end result is their authentic identity. Also, in a real sense, this developmental leaning process exists as a process that teaches, and allows the Black student to practice, learning. The process teaches them how to learn because it provides the practices necessary to learn and enables students to practice self-regulated learning, which I believe produces meaningful learning. Yet that is not solely why I chose self-determination as the agent to empower the Black student.

Why self-determination?

I have now operationalized self-determination, presented its history, and identified the self-determination I believe best to produce empowered self-determined Black students. The question now remains as to why self-determination. To address this inquiry, I could concentrate on the numerous empirical studies that examined self-determination's abilities to improve in-school and postschool transition and quality of life outcomes. I could begin by discussing in-school outcomes and frame the discussion around Martin, et al. (2003), Sarver (2000), and Konrad et al.'s (2007) findings. I could use these researchers' findings, as well as others, to demonstrate the significantly positive relationships between the increased GPAs and self-determination of secondary and postsecondary students with disabilities. I could then use longitudinal studies to express how self-determination best predicts postschool transition success and an

improved quality of life, as indicated by outcomes associated with an individual's employment, home life, postsecondary education, community involvement, and personal and social relationship (Goldberg et al., 2003; Martin et al., 2002; Raskind et al., 2002; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003; Wehmeyer & Schalock, 2001; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997 & 1998).

Thereby, I would have aggregated and analyzed some of the of volumes of research exploring self-determination's abilities to impact the in-school and postschool transition outcomes that sentence many students, specifically Black students, into special education. This presentation, I believe would be sufficient to allow me to assert that research has shown that self-determined students produce the in-school and postschool academic and transition outcomes that might empower Black students to address their special education overrepresentation. I also would have addressed the quality of life indicators that might empower Black students to address their special education overrepresentation through producing postschool outcomes that negate the need for special education services and empower these students to enjoy a life of quality. Essentially, I would have addressed many of the ills plaguing many special education students and demonstrated how self-determination might enable many of these students to achieve. Yet, I also would have defied my purpose and, as was the case with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1987), my silence would have become my betrayal. Just as Dr. King's silence on the Vietnam War betrayed his purpose of human equality and civil rights for all, my silence would have betrayed my purpose to empower and I would have come ever closer to Kauffman's foreshadowing.

Why self-determination? Remember Ward's (1996) lived experiences of self-determination's maturation and the social movements that mandated changes in the attitudes of both individuals with and without disabilities. Remember his belief that it was just as, if not more than, crucial for individuals with disabilities to modify their attitudes. Remember his belief that it took an identity transformation for individuals with disabilities to become more self-determined and manifest societal change. Remember his consideration that today's self-determination was not given, for it was revolutionarily earned. Remember Freire's (1970) words, "freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift" (p. 47). Remember, I framed the Black students' special education story around disempowerment and not in-school or postschool outcomes, nor quality of life indicators, though I addressed these circumstances to provide a thorough overview. Do not misunderstand, I believe the Black student will need to address these domains in due time. However, just as Ward reflected, before beginning these processes, the Black student needs a base and that base he believed individuals with disabilities found in self-determination. Thus, I find it responsible to discuss self-determination's abilities to empower as my response to the inquiry, why self-determination.

Mithaug et al. (2003), when explaining the SDLT's impacts on student disengagement, delved into learned helplessness. They defined learned helplessness in terms of a student who, "instead of learning beliefs and behavior patterns that yield positive results and experiences . . . learn beliefs and behaviors that yield negative results and experiences . . . they learn to be helpless in the face of new challenges" (Mithaug, 2003, p. 9). They opened this discussion with Diener and Dweck's (1978) findings that students who believed they were helpless when faced with a challenge,

were less likely to demonstrate academic improvement. In essence, these students believed in their abilities to succeed less than in their abilities to fail and, as a result, adhered to their beliefs and perpetuated their academic failure and learned to be helpless.

Mithaug et al. continued their learned helplessness discussion and described it in terms of Rotter's (1966) *locus of control theory*. Rotter posited that students with external locus of control remain less likely to control their condition, or even act to control their condition. Essentially, they survive as disempowered souls who, in a real sense, disempower themselves. Mithaug et al. also referenced Weiner's (1976) *causal attribution theory* and its claims that individuals attributing control for their condition to external sources remain less likely to persevere. Essentially, these individuals lose, or experience the diminished will to change their condition, which can become generational. Mithaug et al. then discussed Bandura's (1982) *self-efficacy theory* to explain relationships between beliefs and engagement that contribute to individuals with low self-efficacy being less persistent and successful. Basically, these individuals do not demonstrate the internal fortitude necessary to act because they do not believe they will succeed. Mithaug et al. concluded their discussion with Corno and Mandinach's (1983) position that negative beliefs detract from a student's academic engagement and eventual learning. These students, with their "negative" beliefs, do not perceive an event as doable, and thereby, either do not engage or disengage, which prevents meaningful learning.

Why self-determination? Mithaug et al.'s learned helplessness discussion reflects too many Black students' American experience. It certainly reflects the learned

helplessness and disempowerment I used to frame the overrepresentation story. I focus on empowerment rather than increased in-school, postschool, or quality of life outcomes because Mithaug et al., after presenting learned helplessness, presented a solution. They believed that interventions that changed a student's results, performance, and beliefs, in addition to increasing the student's self-determination, "replace experiences of learned helplessness with experiences of learned control" (Mithaug et al., 2003, p. 9-10) and break the learned helplessness and disempowerment cycle.

When speaking of these changes, Mithaug et al. alluded to identity, which they discussed just as Ward (1996) when he referenced the identity transformation of individuals with disabilities, as they sought to become more self-determined and control their educations and destinies. They spoke of it as did the Black Panther Party when they presented self-determination as a means for the Black community to address many of its concerns rather than asking and waiting for an external human source to serve as a savior (Henderson, personal communication, May 15, 2009). They spoke of it, as did Rapport (1981), who discussed enhancing "the possibilities for people to control their lives" (p. 15). They did not speak of identity as did the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement, which spawned much of what we see in today's special education, if not special education itself, asked America for meaningful equality. America rewarded the Civil Rights Movement with desegregation.

Why self-determination? Self-determination at its essence means control over one's destiny and in 1966, a joint venture between United States Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics, James Coleman, various researchers, and educational institutions produced *The Coleman Report*. The Report

included some 645,000 1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 12th grade Black students, some 4,000 public schools located around America, and many of the educators, principals, and superintendents associated with these schools. The Coleman Report incorporated various research methodologies to elicit responses that addressed topics such as school environment, segregation, and student achievement and motivation. Specifically, the Coleman Report used ethnographic research methodologies to obtain students' responses to inquires such as, "good luck is more important than hard work for success," or "every time I try to get ahead, something or someone stops me," or "people like me don't have much of a chance to be successful in life" (p. 320).

Coleman's Report posited that Black students responding to these statements as true demonstrated higher senses of learned helplessness and lower senses of control over their education and destinies. When researchers compared student responses with their academic records, they found students responding to these statements as untrue to exhibit higher academic achievement and a higher sense of control over their education and destinies. The Coleman Report concluded that a Black student's sense of control over his or her education and destiny best predicted a Black student's academic achievement. Coleman and his fellow researchers defined the Black student's sense of control over his or her education and destiny in terms of beliefs that his or her actions can and do manifest his or her outcomes. Ross and Broh (2000) researched this sense of control and found that academically achieving students felt (a) in control of their environment, (b) that their efforts decided their outcomes, and (c) in control of their successes or failures. American education now refers to these feelings as self-determination. Thus, the Coleman report considered self-determined Black students

embodying a sense of control over their education and destiny to be the most academically productive Black student.

Why self-determination? The Coleman Report's finding that a Black student's sense of control over his or her education and destiny, or self-determination, best predicts his or her academic achievement should be no surprise. Coleman's findings should present no surprise especially when considering that Franklin (1984) examined artifact narratives, songs, sermons, and interviews of enslaved and formerly enslaved Africans in America and found that many used the term self-determination. Franklin also found that many believed in self-determination, and defined it as control over one's destiny. Furthermore, he found that many of these individuals believed that education brought self-determination, and self-determination brought freedom. In essence, Franklin found these predecessors to today's Black student defining self-determination as freedom. Why self-determination? Quite simply put, and I reiterate,

> what we see in special education's disproportional representation of Black students is the same battle Blacks have waged since arriving on North America soil as enslaved Africans . . . [and] Blacks have bled, cried, and died to be free and have the freedom to control their education and destinies (Goff, 2007).

Why self-determination? Many of the self-determined pursuits fundamental to today's individuals with disabilities birthed from Black students and their communities' pursuits, which facilitated American social movements that precipitated modifications in attitude, perception, beliefs, and identity. Becoming and demonstrating increased self-determination might enable Black students and their communities to do just as

individuals with disabilities did in their quest for the right to be self-determined and control their education and destinies. Why self-determination? Self-determination might produce the empowered Black students necessary to address the overrepresentation phenomenon and so much more. Why self-determination?

Why self-determination? Being humble, truthful, and sincere, it would be disingenuous for me not to confide that I consider the Black students' special education overrepresentation and the empowerment needed to address this concern as a social movement. Also, I believe as did Wehmeyer (1996) when he spoke of self-determination in the context of social movements, "self-determination and empowerment are often used interchangeably" (p. 19). Why self-determination? I choose self-determination because it aligns with my overall purpose to empower and because "over the last fifty years power within the Black community power has come to mean control over one's destiny" (Kimbro & Hill, 1991, p. 48). Why self-determination? What better than self-determination to empower the Black student and Black community?

Why self-determination? To answer this question, I reiterate Mithaug et al.'s (2003) following sentiment, being self-determined enables one to "replace experiences of learned helplessness with experiences of learned control (p. 9-10). Why self-determination? I believe the Black student requires and seeks self-determination and I believe self-determination might enable many Black students to experience the learned control that juxtaposes the learned helplessness contained in the Black students' special education experience and the Black students' American history. Why self-

determination? That's why self-determination. However, I do not believe the self-determination I presented best to empower the Black student.

Black Self-Determination

Now that I finished my demonstration, with researchers as my audience, I need to assert a few things. First. I composed the self-determination section as a demonstration of my command of the literature, abilities to differentiate between researchers' self-determination constructs, and demonstrate self-determination's potential to empower the Black student. In the process, I became a researcher communicating with other researchers treating the Black student as an object to be saved. However, through my blatant and purposeful omission of the Black student as an audience member, I disempowered those most impacted by special education's overrepresentation, and yet I feel confident that I satisfied my doctoral dissertation responsibilities to the academy and betrayed my authentic true self and vision to empower, for I did not discuss teaching and learning.

At the heart of the Black students' special education overrepresentation story lays teaching and learning. At the heart lays the teaching that produces the learning that might enable a Black student to experience the postschool transition outcomes that contribute to postschool success, decreased special education placement, and a life of quality. I have not discussed this teaching and learning and, as a result, have become Kauffman's foreshadowing of perpetuated ignorance. To the naked eye, it may appear that I spoke of teaching and learning, for I discussed self-determination's abilities to produce academic in-school and postschool success. That self-determination, founded upon a European philosopher's prescription for wealthy European adolescent males and

the premise of "normalcy," is not the self-determination for a collection of "colored" individuals considered "diverse." I did not write of teaching and learning, for I do not believe that self-determination is best to teach Black students to learn. I do not believe so, for "the masters' tools cannot dismantle the masters' house" (Lorde, 1984).

The self-determination I believe best empowers the Black student resides in Whiting's (2006) scholar identity model. Whiting developed his model in response a Black male's academic disengagement, devaluation, and rejection that leads to hopelessness and helplessness and his belief that "we must promote and nurture a scholar identity" (p. 223). Whiting presented his belief that the earlier we focus on the scholar identity, the greater the likelihood we can produce students who "break the vicious cycle of underachievement" (p. 223). He wrote with such passion and purpose that I believed him when he wrote that identity influenced underachievement and "we cannot develop a scholar identity . . . by focusing exclusively on . . . academic needs and development . . . we must also address . . . social/emotional needs and development" (p. 227). Though he specifically prescribed his scholar identity model for Black adolescent males, Whiting described a self-determination identity development process that I believe best empowers the Black student. In fact, Ford, who regularly published with Whiting and assisted in the identity model's development, said his process reminded her of my very own (Goff, 2006), though she believed we used different terms to operationalize the same constructs (personal communication April 4, 2008).

Whiting's scholar identity model entails multiple steps, which I believe when rearranged equate to Black self-determination, or as Franklin (1984) found, control over one's destiny. While discussing the need for achievement, which I earlier discussed as a

hunger, he alluded to intrinsically motivated students who allow their learning to guide their decisions. Whiting's self-awareness, he described in terms of a Black male maintaining an open and honest understanding of his strengths and limitations, which enables him to adjust. Whiting described this future orientation as the aspirations that enable Black males to consider their behaviors and decisions in regards to future outcomes. Sounds a lot like self-regulated decision-making, in that these students choose realistic goals and develop and adhere to plans. Whiting's willingness to sacrifice refers to students enduring "trials and tribulations" in the processes of taking action to reach short and long-term goals.

Whiting's scholar identity model, I believe centers around internal locus of control. He presented internal locus of control as a self-engaged and self-regulating student who reflects (a) optimism, (b) a strong work ethic, (c) class participation, and (d) completes academic assignments. Further, he believed these students maintained the belief that they controlled their outcomes. More than that, these students assumed the "responsibility for their choices and actions, while begin mindful of outside pressures and societal injustices" (p. 225). Whiting's internal locus of control, I liken to self-determination's control over one's education and destiny.

Whiting also presented academic self-confidence, which I liken to an amalgamation of self-awareness and self-efficacy because it entails understanding and believing in oneself as an intellectually capable student. His racial identity, I understand as self-acceptance in that these individuals accept their culture's significance to their experience and also understand being "bicultural." Even more significant, Whiting's racial identity included students seeking to better understand their racial identity and

students who did not fall victim to the burden of acting White because they understood the misperceptions associated with being Black. Whiting's self-efficacy, he believed to be the "center of a scholar identity" (p. 224). He described self-efficacy in terms of the "high" resiliency, self-confidence, self-control, and self-responsibility that enabled students to believe they could achieve their goals.

Whiting's scholar identity model, though specifically designed for Black males in response to their underrepresentation in America's gifted education programs, presented the self-determination I believe best empowers the Black student. His model focused on learning and emphasized learning about self. Learning about self, he believed to be a most critical component of a Black male's education and scholar identity. I consider it a fundamental component of any student's, especially a Black student's, education and scholar identity. I hold this belief because, as I have demonstrated, the Black students' special education story is a story of misperception and disempowerment. Thus, I believe this self-determination's learning about self to be a key to empowering the Black student and community to address the misperception and disempowerment that I believe perpetuates their special education overrepresentation story. This self-determination teaches Black students to acquire the authentic self-awareness needed to combat the misperception that they are inherently inferior.

I needed to include this *Black Self-Determination Experience* section, for without it I would not have achieved my goal. As a result, I would not be self-determined. I included this Black Self-Determination Experience section because, while writing I realized that speaking about self-determination is totally different than being self-determined. I had to write with self-determination, for without self-determination I

would have become the embodiment of self-inquiry. I would have questioned my identity. I would have questioned whether I was that selfish traitor who placed professional gain before my very own self-determination. I would have questioned whether I was a goal setter and not a goal attainer. I would have questioned whether I was that sell-out discussed in my diary? I would have questioned whether I was a hypocrite. I would have questioned whether I was a manifestation of Kauffman's ignorance. I would have questioned whether I was Fordham's (1988) Black community member who adhered to the American educational system's unwritten mandate to become "un-black" (Fordham, 1988, p. 58). I would have questioned whether I had become so many of the things I abhor and feared becoming. In essence, I would have questioned if I were me.

I had to write this Black Self-Determination Experience section because, while writing I realized, "what a man can be, he must be" (Maslow, 1943, p. 382). I must be self-determined and in control of my voice, education, and destiny. I had to write this Black Self-Determination Experience section because my quest to be self-determined began with "the recognition that [I had] been destroyed" (Freire, 1970, p. 68). I had to write this section because "those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly" (Freire, 1970, p. 60), and, while re-examining myself, I witnessed my need for self-determination. I had to write this Black Self-Determination Experience section because I needed to distinguish Black self-determination from the many self-determination discussions Wehmeyer (1996) referred to as a "Tower of Babel" (p. 19), though I did indeed add to the "Tower." Still, I needed to write this Black Self-Determination Experience section because I believe self-

determination can facilitate the Black student and community's empowerment and address their special education overrepresentation. I needed to write this Black Self-Determination Experience section, for without this section I would have only alluded to liberation. With this Black Self-Determination Experience section , I have contributed to liberation in that I did not omit the Black student or community and, in the process relegated them to "objects, which must be saved" (Freire, 1970). I had to write this Black Self-Determination Experience section because I am Black self-determination. I had to write this section to segue into The Black Self-Determination Experience.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

Chapter two concentrated on the Black students' special education overrepresentation. It detailed the long-lasting impacts of a misperception and its potential contributions to disempowerment. Essentially, chapter two detailed America misperceiving the Black students as inferior, which I believe birthed many of the structures present today that perpetuate the Black students' special education overrepresentation, and so many other educational and societal concerns. Chapter two's depiction of researchers' solutions demonstrated that many of these proposals omitted the Black student, which added to disempowerment. In all, chapter two spoke of misperception and disempowerment. Therefore, I developed The Black Self-Determination Experience to empower a Black student through accentuating their self-awareness.

The Black Self-Determination Experience encompasses culturally responsive teaching practices that include a Black student in "meaningful and relevant activities and in experiences . . . directly linked to their background experience" (Shealey et al., 2005, p. 118). I developed it based on Martin and Marshall's (1995) six self-determination behaviors. This study sought to determine if The Black Self-Determination Experience's would enable Black students to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their education and destiny, which might then empower them to address their special education overrepresentation.

Recruitment

The Black Self-Determination Experience specifically addressed the self-determination and academic identities of secondary Black students with and without

IEPs, and thereby, required a specific sample of secondary Black students, with and without IEPs, and their parents and/or legal guardians. I employed purposeful sampling to recruit this sample (Mertens, 2005). Purposeful sampling techniques enabled me to select participants fitting predetermined criteria, which I first describe. Then, I discuss the recruitment procedures used to acquire my sample. Last, I discuss the sample.

Student inclusionary criteria. To be recruited, students had to fit specific criteria. First, the student had to self-identify as being Black, or African American. Second, the student had to attend, at the time of the study, the participating secondary school. Third, if the student did not attend the participating school at the time of the study, they had to have graduated from the school no later than May 9 2009 (the final semester prior to their Black Self-Determination Experience). Fourth, students had to demonstrate the abilities to appropriately complete all research activities, which I assessed via a screening process that comprised two distinct methods both conducted at the participating school. First, considering The Black Self-Determination Experience included various assigned readings, I provided generic documents similar to those used throughout research procedures to potential student participants. Students read the documents, as I listened to assure that they could complete all reading research assignments. Second, considering The Black Self-Determination Experience included written diary entries, I asked students to create a generic diary entry, which I reviewed to assess whether they could coherently and thoughtfully complete written assignments. Finally, before being included and participating in any research activities, students had to provide written assent and their participating parent or legal guardian's written assent. If under the age of 18, students had to provide written parental/guardian

consent. All written assent and consent forms, which indicated an understood obligation to complete all research activities, had to be submitted before any student, parent, or legal guardian could engage in The Black Self-Determination Experience. No screening data appears in my results.

Parents/guardians inclusionary criteria. To be recruited parents/guardians had to fit the following criteria. First, the individual needed to be the legal parent/guardian of a potential participating student. Second, the parent or guardian needed to provide written consent, which indicated that they would complete all research activities. Lastly, they needed to provide written consent for a child under 18 years of age.

Recruitment site. As a part of my purposeful sampling, I sought a suburban secondary school predominantly consisting of White middle class students, educators, and administrators. Essentially, I sought one of Fryer and Torelli's (2006) "buffer" zones because these environments produce Black students more likely to experience the burden of acting White. I sought students with these experiences, because these students I deemed most in need of a Black Self-Determination Experience. I selected a secondary school from a southwestern United States suburban community with a population of 101,719 individuals. Whites constituted 82%, other/mixed individuals constituted 7%, Blacks and Native Americans each constituted 4%, and Asian Americans constituted 3% of the community's residents. The school's student body reflected the community's demographics. At the school, Whites constituted 74%, Blacks constituted 8.5%, Native Americans constituted 8.3%, and Asian American students constituted 2.2% of the student body. The school's female students, at 51%,

narrowly outnumbered its male students. Middle class White females constituted an overwhelming majority of the schools educators and administrators. Even the school's principal was White, middle class, and female.

Academically, the school's 2007-2008 No Child Left Behind Annual Report Card indicated that 82.6% of its students graduated. In regards to the End of Instruction (EOI) assessments, the schools reading scores reflected its overall performance. Sixty-six percent of the school's assessed students scored advanced, 17% scored satisfactory, 9% scored limited knowledge, and 7% scored unsatisfactory. Seventy percent of the school's "regular" education students scored advanced on their reading EOIs, while 15% scored satisfactory, 8% scored limited knowledge, and 6% scored unsatisfactory. Only 42% of the school's students with IEPs who used accommodations scored advanced, 32% scored satisfactory, 26% scored limited knowledge, and 10% scored unsatisfactory. Sixty-nine percent of the school's tested White students scored advanced on their reading EOIs, while 16% scored satisfactory, 8% scored limited knowledge, and 7% scored unsatisfactory. Of the school's Black students, 48% scored advanced, 13% scored satisfactory, 29% scored limited knowledge, and 10% scored unsatisfactory on their reading EOIs.

Recruitment procedures. My recruitment process included seven steps and resulted in an initial sample of 10 students and nine parents and one legal guardian. First, I located Black Self-Determination Experience advertisements around the participating secondary school and delivered them to the school's special education classrooms and educators (see Appendix C for advertisement). Second, I hand delivered advertisement to students fitting inclusionary criteria. Third, after finding interested

parties, I communicated face-to-face with their parents/guardians and generically described The Black Self-Determination Experience, while not providing information that might compromise my findings. During these meetings, I acquired verbal permission to speak further with their child. Fourth, if these individuals continued to show interest and provided permission for me to speak with their child, I screened students and determined their potential to complete Black Self-Determination Experience obligations. Fifth, I provided assent and consent forms to individuals fitting inclusionary criteria and indicating a willingness to participate. Sixth, when students arrived for their first meeting, I met face-to-face with their parent/guardian to obtain their written assent and consent when applicable. Seventh, after receiving these signatures, I included 10 students, nine parents, and one legal guardian. However, my findings reflect the five students, four parents, and legal guardian who completed all Black Self-Determination Experience activities.

Participants

Students. Table 9 presents student descriptors. As evidenced in the table, I included the four males and one female student who completed their Experience obligations.

Table 9

Student Descriptors

Students' Names	Gender	Grade
Hatshepsut	Female	Sophomore
Evolving	Male	Sophomore

Quest	Male	Junior
Wisdom	Male	Senior
Perspective	Male	Graduate

The participating high school used an IEP to serve two of the students, with one classified with MR and another classified with a LD. Students' grade classifications ranged from a freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior to two students who had graduated in May 2009. Since the study occurred during students' summer vacations, I classified students according to the grade they would enter upon the vacation's end. I now explore each student more thoroughly.

Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut, a sophomore classified with MR, spent four of her six class hours inside a resource room. She only left to attend home economics and art. As a result of Hurricane Katrina, she relocated from an urban predominantly Black New Orleans' community and school to this suburban predominantly White community and school. When Hatshepsut was a mere two years old, her mother met an untimely demise. As a result, Hatshepsut lived with her aunt, who served as her legal guardian. Numerous extended family members, with many attending the same secondary school, comprised the aunt's household.

As a student, Hatshepsut routinely skipped class and argued with teachers. She also engaged in numerous fights with males and females and, on one such occasion, fractured another female student's nose. She maintained membership with the school's Black Student Association (BSA) and frequently attended meetings. Her frequent inappropriate behaviors would not permit her membership in the school's *Dime Squad*, an all female and all Black dance team that her siblings founded. Her behavior also

disqualified her from participating on the school's basketball team, though she often acknowledged her desire to participate. She did, however, participate in her church's basketball league. Many administrative discussions and decisions surrounding Hatshepsut, considered whether her behaviors reflected her "poor" New Orleans' schooling, or disability. I use the name *Hatshepsut* to represent this student because I believe she holds the will and promise to be a foremost among noble ladies, once she begins to believe in herself, which begins with self-awareness.

Evolving. Evolving, a sophomore who lived with his White mother and Black father, considered himself Black. He lived with his parents in an affluent rural neighborhood and often invited students to the family home where his parents prepared meals for the guests. Behaviorally, he embodied the behaviors that found him admiration from his educators and peers. It seemed that everyone regarded him as someone pleasant to befriend. He often spoke of participating on the school's basketball team, though he did not. Initially, he participated in the freshmen basketball team's try-outs, which the school conducted before school. After only a couple practices, Evolving did not return because, as he indicated, he considered the practice time too early in the day. His decision admittedly disappointed his potential coach who specifically asked that he attend try-outs. Evolving also indicated a desire to play on the school's football team, but did not attend those try-outs either.

Evolving eventually became a member of the school's Mo Phi Psi, which was in its initial year. A group of the school's Black males developed Mo Phi Psi to be a community building group centered around civic acts, academic achievement, postschool success, and establishing a voice and leadership presence within the school.

Mo Phi Psi held weekly lunch meetings, which Evolving joined during his second semester, though he frequently arrived late to meetings, if he attended at all. His infrequent attendance once became a Mo Phi Psi agenda item. Members made his attendance an issue because many believed marijuana usage influenced his attendance, or lack thereof. When in attendance though, he routinely assumed an informal leadership position and often offered his home as an off-campus meeting site. I use the name *Evolving* to represent this student because I believed him to be in the process of acquiring the self-awareness necessary to facilitate his future successes. In essence, I perceived him as a work in process.

Quest. Quest, a junior classified with a LD, only visited the resource room two of his six school hours. He relocated from Mississippi to live with his father. He was a rather quiet student who participated in Mo Phi Psi. As a Mo Phi Psi member, he rarely, if ever, missed a meeting or arrived late. While in meetings, he often sat quietly and ate his lunch, though his laughter could be heard when the group became comical. He also participated as a member of the school's football team. There existed no disciplinary referrals associated with Quest and everyone seemed to enjoy his company. His peers seemed to hold him with such esteem that they defended him if another student ever questioned his quietness. I use the name *Quest* to represent this student because I believe he sincerely sought the self-awareness that would facilitate his future successes, though I am not sure he understood his needed self-awareness as Evolving.

Wisdom. Wisdom, a senior, relocated from Africa's west coast to the school district while in elementary school. He considered himself Black, but did not seem to adhere to many of the same ethos as his fellow students or other *Experience* students.

His two older two sisters graduated from the same high school and, at the time, both attended postsecondary educational institutions. Behaviorally, Wisdom's teachers often discussed his perpetual class skipping, which he did not deny, nor did he deny his academic disengagement. However, he was quick to remind concerned parties that he would elevate his GPA before the semester's end, and apparently always did. Towards the end of his junior year, his repeated class skipping and academic disengagement and underachievement became such an issue that his teachers consulted his mother, who remained involved in his education through frequent school visits and phone consultations. With her, they discussed his academic underachievement and marijuana usage, which Wisdom never denied. Still, they seemed impressed enough with his academic potential that he became a member of the school's Leadership Club and the Distributive Education Clubs of America, or DECA.

When discussing his academic underachievement, which equated to below average, but not failing, grades, Wisdom often discussed boredom and disinterest. From time-to-time, he also mentioned his father's frequent and extended professional trips to Africa, which for all intense and purpose, left his mother as a single parent. Still, Wisdom never denied, or seemed to doubt, his abilities to academically achieve at the highest level and often cited his standardized test scores, which resulted in numerous scholarship opportunities, as verification. He also often cited that he would graduate early and attend the community's university where he would earn college credits as a high school student.

Wisdom, a musically talented youth, sang and played the piano for his church and the school's musical choir. Early in his junior year, he served as a founding

member of the school's Mo Phi Psi brotherhood. He also maintained membership in the BSA. Midway through his junior year, he discontinued his membership in both organizations, and afterwards, rarely missed a meeting and often added his leadership. I use the name *Wisdom* to represent this student because I believe he most reflected the self-engaged and regulated meaningful learning gained from truly evaluating one's experience, which I believe he did from a sense of his future self. It may seem odd to consider Wisdom self-engaged considering his teachers' concerns about his academic disengagement. I have no qualms with considering him self-engaged because, to me, he appeared bored and only engaged when challenged. It almost seems that he purposefully underachieved in order to find challenge and motivation.

Perspective. Perspective, a May 2009 graduate, relocated from Africa's west coast to the community in elementary school. He considered himself Black and his fellow classmates used his first initial and attached the word "con" to create his nickname. The nickname seemed as a reference to an African entertainer, also from Africa's west coast, who had received American celebrity status. As a student, Perspective had no disciplinary or academic concerns. His educators and administrators considered him a "good" student with a "bright" future. Perspective entered his Experience already enrolled at a division one university and with the timeline he planned to use to complete his degree. He also entered seemingly concerned with his classmates who often discussed his propensity to date "White girls," and his view that many Black students perpetuated their own shortcomings by constantly blaming the "White man." I refer to this student as *Perspective* because he always seemed to present a perception contrary to the group, and often challenged group members to revisit their

positions. His perspective facilitated diverse, opinionated, and at times argumentative debates.

Parents and guardian. The Experience's student sample necessitated the inclusion of parents or legal guardians. As a result, I included three fathers, two mothers, and one female legal guardian. I included Quest, Wisdom, and Perspective's fathers, Evolving's mothers, and Hatshepsut's auntie (legal guardian).

Facilitator. I, the Black Self-Determination Experience's developer, facilitated all Black Self-Determination Experience meetings. In the sixth year of my doctoral studies, my line of research concentrated on understanding the Black students' special education overrepresentation. While concentrating on this understanding, I came to appreciate self-determination's potential abilities to empower Black students to address the in-school and postschool transition outcomes that perpetuate their special education overrepresentation. At the time of this study, I served as a second-year resource room English and History special educator to students with MR, EBD, or a LD at the participating school. I also served as the DCDT's Human Rights and Cultural Diversity chair. As the chair, I maintained the responsibilities to ensure that the HRCD perpetually addressed the equal opportunities of all students, specifically students with IEPs, transitioning to adult life. Goff et al. (2007) described me as a bald headed Black male researcher with a gold hoop earring in each ear.

Setting

I conducted all Black Self-Determination Experience meetings at the division one university located in the same community as the participating secondary school. We met in a one of two rooms located in the same building at the university. We

opened our meetings in the conference room of a university building that temporarily housed the university's center dedicated to the learning enrichment of students with disabilities. The conference room contained a rather large rectangular shaped table, with more than enough seats for all student participants The room's blinds, which covered all windows, shielded students from the university's everyday activities and visitors. In the event that the university commandeered the conference room, we moved our meetings to the building's "reading room." The university maintained the reading room for students needing a quiet area to read, study, or relax. The reading room seemed more informal, with its comfortable couches and love seats that sat rather close to the floor. This room, which was much smaller than the conference room, seemed cozy, inviting, and its solid wooden door secluded students from university activities and visitors. The students expressed an affinity for the reading room. Thus, we used this room whenever available. Regardless of the room, the university daily provided students doughnuts and sodas.

Research Design

Eight research questions drove The Experience's purpose to better understand its impacts upon participating students' self-determination levels and academic identities. These eight research questions dictated the research design. To appropriately address these research questions, I believed triangulation, or including more than one source to acquire a more realistic understanding of a phenomena (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), best facilitated my access to the data that might then enable me to answer my eight research questions. Thus, I employed a mixed methodological research design.

Small-n-design. I employed a multielement design with an equivalent non-intervention baseline design to address research questions one through four and eight. This multielement with an equivalent non-intervention baseline design enabled me to alternate between conditions (pre and post content knowledge assessments) to establish experimental control (Kennedy, 2005). I chose the multielement with an equivalent non-intervention baseline design in response to research questions, sample size, and because it enabled me to examine the Experience's impacts on multiple students' acquisition of central content knowledge through observing variations in their percent of correct responses

The multielement with an equivalent non-intervention baseline design includes baseline and intervention conditions. During baseline conditions, I administered pre and post Black Self-Determination Experience content knowledge assessments. I administered these assessments to both groups until I established a stable baseline, or consistent scoring pattern. After establishing each group's baseline, which included establishing individual baselines for each student, I applied intervention conditions. During the intervention, for those meetings with a corresponding content knowledge assessment, I (a) administered that meeting's content knowledge pre assessment, (d) delivered the meeting's instruction, and (c) concluded the meeting with the same prompts as a post assessment. For meetings without a corresponding content knowledge assessment, I delivered the meeting's instruction and concluded with at least one diary entry in which students discussed the meeting's significance.

Phenomenological qualitative design. To address research questions five through eight, I employed an phenomenological qualitative design. Van Kaam (1966)

believed that predetermined experimental designs and statistical methods might "distort rather than disclose a given behavior . . . [and] preclude one from] the full meaning and richness of human behavior" (p. 14). He further believed that the phenomenology sought to unveil a phenomenon. I chose this phenomenological approach because it seeks to address experimental designs' potential masking of behavior through determining "what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). Also, I chose this approach because phenomenologist believe in multiple ways to interpret experience, while emphasizing the subjective characteristic of human's behavior (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). They also believe that accessing an individual's conceptual world enables the researcher to access the perceptions that construct an individual's reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Essentially, I chose the phenomenological approach to better understand participating students' perceptions of their Black Self-Determination Experience and why they needed a Black Self-Determination Experience.

Dependent Variables

To adequately address Black Self-Determination Experience quantitative research questions and purpose, I employed four individual dependent variables (see Table 10 for quantitative research questions and associated dependent variables).

Table 10

Quantitative Research Questions and Associated Dependent Variables

Quantitative Research Question	Dependent Variable
What impacts might the Black Self-Determination	Black Self-Determination

Experience have on student content knowledge scores, as measured by Black Self-Determination Experience Content Knowledge pre and post assessments?	Experience Content Knowledge pre and post scores
What impacts might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on student self-determination scores, as measured by the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form?	AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form self-determination level
What impacts might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on student self-determination scores, as measured by the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form?	AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form self-determination level
What impacts might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on student academic identities, as measured by the CCAM?	CCAM identity

I included Black Self-Determination Experience knowledge pre and post assessments to assess student acquisition of essential curriculum content. I employed the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form to assess student self-determination levels, as evaluated by the individual student. I employed the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form to assess student self-determination levels, as articulated by the participating parents or the legal guardian. I used Columbus's (2006) Cultural Connectedness Achievement Measure (CCAM) to assess student academic identities, as described by the individual student. In all, I believe these four variables enabled me to (a) evaluate The Black Self-Determination Experience's impacts upon student self-determination levels and academic identities, (b) address my eight research questions, and (c) realize the study's purpose. Next, I will explore each dependent variable individually.

Black Self-Determination Experience content knowledge pre and post assessments. Black Self-Determination Experience research questions one, five, and eight each addressed student acquisition of essential content Black Self-Determination Experience knowledge. To address these research questions, I developed and used seven distinct content knowledge pre and post assessments that coincided with intervention meetings two through eight (see Appendix D for pre and post assessments). Each lesson specific content knowledge assessment contained seven to ten multiple-choice and short-answer inquires. Through administering these content knowledge assessments as pre and post meeting measures, I hoped to better understand student acquisition of Black Self-Determination Experience content. After completing each content quiz, students self-scored in response to the correct answers, totaled their number of correct responses, and then divided their total number of correct responses by the total number of responses to produce the percent of correct responses possible. I then used this percent of correct responses as the content knowledge dependent measure.

AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form. Black Self-Determination Experience research questions two, six, and eight each addressed student self-determination levels. To address these research questions, I used Woman et al.'s (1994) AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form (see Appendix E for a copy of the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form). This scale assesses a student's perceptions of his or her self-determination levels by prompting students to use a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "never" to "always," to rate their capacities and opportunities to self-determine. The scale employs 24 self-report survey items addressing (a) things I do, (b)

how I feel (perceptions about one's knowledge and ability to self-determine), (c) what happens at school (student opportunities to self-determine at school), and (d) what happens at home (student opportunities to self-determine at home). The scale also includes three short-answer questions pertaining to goal setting and goal attainment, which I did not use. I administered the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form during students' first and 10th meetings. Through administering this scale during meeting one to acquire baseline data, then administering the scale during meeting 10, I hoped to better understand the Experience's impacts upon students' perceptions of their self-determination levels.

To score the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form, I first instructed students to total their points for each of the scale's four categories (i.e., things I do, how I fee, what happens at school, and what happens at home). I then instructed them to sum all these scores together, which resulted in a raw score. Students then used the Scale's "level of self-determination scale" to graph the score. The scale presents an individual's self-determination level via a raw score with the maximum score being 120. The Scale also enables users to understand their raw score as a percentage with the maximum being 100%. Since the scale provides score by the tens, it can be visually challenging to determine an exact percent. Thus, I divided a student's total raw score by the total score possible (e.g. 120) to determine their self-determination level as a percentage. This percentage I used as a dependent measure that reflected each student's self-determination level, as articulated by each individual student.

AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form. Black Self-Determination Experience research questions three, six, and eight each addressed student self-

determination levels, as articulated by their parent or legal guardian. To address these research questions, I employed Woman et al.'s (1994) AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form (see Appendix F for a copy of the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form). This Scale assesses a parent or legal guardian's perceptions of their child's self-determination levels by prompting a parent or legal guardian to use a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "never" to "always," to rate their child's capacities and opportunities to self-determine at home and school. The scale employs 18 survey items addressing (a) things my child does, (b) what happens at school (student opportunities to self-determine at school), and (c) what happens at home (student opportunities to self-determine at home). This scale, aligned with AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form, includes three short-answer questions pertaining to a student's goal setting and goal attainment, which I did not use.

To administer the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form, I delivered a copy to students at the end of their first and ninth meetings and asked that they have them completed by the parent or legal guardian who completed their parental consent forms. I then asked students to return the completed forms to their next Black Self-Determination Experience meeting. Through administering this scale to acquire baseline data and then administering it near the Experience's conclusion, I hoped to better understand impacts upon participating student's self-determination levels, as perceived by their parent or legal guardian. I believe this Scale, when correlated with the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form, facilitated my understanding of The Black Self-Determination Experience's impacts upon participating student's self-determination levels.

To score the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent form, I used the same process as when scoring the Student Form. I first, instructed students to total their points for each of the scale's four categories (i.e., things I do, how I feel, what happens at school, and what happens at home). I then instructed them to sum all these scores together, which resulted in a raw score. Students then used the Scale's "level of self-determination scale" to graph the score. I used the students' calculated total raw score and divided it by the total score possible (e.g. 120) to determine their self-determination level as a percentage. This percentage I used as a dependent measure that reflected each student's self-determination level, as articulated by his or her parent/guardian.

The Cultural Connectedness Achievement Measure. Black Self-Determination Experience research questions four, seven, and eight each addressed academic identity. To address these questions, I employed a modified version of Columbus's (2006) CCAM (see Appendix G for the original and modified CCAM). The CCAM employs 12 self-report survey questions, based on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "not true at all" to "very true," to assess a Black student's academic identity in relation to their cultural connectedness. The CCAM identifies if a Black student reflects a Raceless, Oppositional, Primary Cultural, Primary Cultural and Raceless, or Primary Cultural and Oppositional academic identity (see Table 11 for a brief description of each CCAM identity).

Table 11

CCAM Academic Identities

Category	Mastery Goals	Academic efficacy	Performance Approach Goals	Performance Avoidance Goals	Disruptive Behaviors	Self-handicapping Behaviors

Raceless	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	No	No
Oppositional	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Yes	Yes
Primary Cultural	High	Fairly High	Moderate	Moderate	No	No
Primary Cultural and Raceless	High	High	High	Moderate	Yes (Low Rate)	No
Primary Cultural and Oppositional	High	High	Moderate	Low	No	Yes (Low Rate)

Note. From Columbus, M. A. (2006*). Cultural identification and academic achievement: Validation of the cultural connectedness achievement measure and its use in understanding motivational characteristics of oppositional, racelessness, and primary cultural identification*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma, Norman.

To score the CCAM, I instructed students to make three columns in their Black Self-Determination Experience diaries or on their completed CCAM. Atop the first column, I instructed students to write "primary cultural." Atop the second column, I instructed students to write "raceless." Atop the third column, I instructed students to write "oppositional." I then referred to Columbus's identification of prompts as being indicative of either a raceless, primary cultural, or oppositional identity. For example, Columbus considered prompt one to be indicative of an oppositional identity. Thus, higher scores on this prompt indicate the increased likelihood that one holds an oppositional identity. I then read each question aloud and its associated identity and asked students to write their score in the appropriate column. Fro example, if a student scored a four on prompt one, that student would write "4" for question one under the

oppositional column. After reading all questions, and informing students as to which category the score fit, I instructed students to sum each category. Whichever category they found to have the highest raw score, we considered as their academic identity and another dependent measure. For scores within three points of one another, we considered as a blended identity. I administered the CCAM to students during their fifth and ninth meetings. Through administering the CCAM during meeting five, I hoped to acquire the baseline data I could compare to meeting nine's administration and, as a result, better understand the Experience's impacts upon participating student's academic identities. I now detail each CCAM academic identity.

Raceless. Columbus (2006) described raceless students as those who use assimilation as a coping mechanism to secure educational success. He further described these students as individuals who deny their relationship with the Black community in their attempts to gain upward social mobility. Fordham's (1988) work concurs with Columbus' assessment and further suggests that raceless students remain in jeopardy of having their Black community membership revoked. Columbus found raceless students to exhibit high mastery goals, which means they typically develop goals based on their competence and belief that "it is important . . . to learn a lot of new concepts" (Columbus, 2006, p. 39). He also found these students to hold high academic efficacy, or a high regard for their academic capabilities. His research found that raceless students held moderate performance approach goals, which means they develop goals to validate their "competence," which Columbus believed indicated a non-competitive nature. Lastly, Columbus believed raceless students held moderately high performance avoidance goals, which means they develop goals to demonstrate their competence

rather than demonstrating that they are not incompetent. Such a level of performance avoidance, Columbus believed indicated that raceless students experience concerns about failure and "embarrassment." Raceless students, according to Columbus, did not demonstrate disruptive or self-handicapping behaviors. He also believed that these students did not present the behaviors that contribute to academic underachievement or sabotage (i.e. not studying, excessive absences, not completing academic assignments, etc.), which other identity types hold responsible for academic failure. Additionally, Columbus described raceless students as believing that they could realize the "American Dream."

Oppositional. Columbus described students embodying an oppositional academic identity in terms of their resistance "to implicit and explicit school goals . . . [and who] mistrust the [American educational] system as another institution controlled by White Americans" (p. 25). He further posited that oppositional students disbelieved that education would provide long-term solutions and maintained "negative" educational stereotypes that decreased their opportunities to fully self-engage in their educations. He also believed oppositional students believed an American education compromised their identities. Columbus found oppositional students to exhibit results negatively correlating with mastery goals, academic efficacy, and performance approach goals. In other words, these students placed more prestige upon their Black identity than their education and remained ambivalent and "pessimistic about future success in the White world" (Columbus, 2006, p. 64). Accordingly, Columbus considered these students to be significantly more likely to engage in disruptive

behaviors and use self-handicapping strategies as a means of saving their identities. He concluded that oppositional students held no desire to realize the American Dream.

Primary cultural. Columbus described students with a primary cultural academic identity as those who "adopt accommodation without assimilation" (p. 26). In other words, these students reflect both "mainstream" and Black community values and use their Black community membership as motivation to succeed and better the Black community. Columbus found primary cultural students exhibiting results that indicated: (a) a positive correlation with mastery goals and performance approach goals, (b) "fairly high" academic efficacy, (c) a negative correlation with performance avoidance goals, and (d) a "strong identification with academics" (Columbus, 2006, p. 56). They also seemed to believe that education beget future success and that "if they [remained] true to their own Black culture and community, they [would] be successful in school and in the future" (Columbus, 2006, p. 65). Columbus concluded a primary cultural Black student to be the student America needed to develop because these students were most likely to produce productive academic outcomes, maintain their Black community membership, and not produce the disruptive nor self-handicapping behaviors that contribute to academic underachievement and sabotage.

Primary cultural and raceless. Columbus described students with a primary cultural and raceless academic identity in terms of their amalgamation of the primary cultural and raceless academic identities. He described that these students held moderately high stereotypical beliefs indicative of a raceless student, which is to say that these students believed stereotypes "about the general performance of [Blacks] in academic areas and [endorsed] . . . commonly held stereotypes of [Blacks] (Columbus,

2006, p. 30). These students also exhibited behaviors indicative of a primary cultural student, in that they held a high identification with academics. Columbus found these students to exhibit results indicating high mastery goals, academic efficacy, and performance approach goals, which indicated a non-competitive nature. He also found these students to exhibit moderately high performance avoidance goals, a "low rate" of disruptive behaviors, and no self-handicapping strategies. Black students with this identity produce GPAs equal to students with a raceless academic identity and higher than students holding a primary cultural academic identity. Columbus did not consider these students "exceedingly" competitive but "moderately troubled by failure and embarrassment" (p. 65). In all a Black student with a primary cultural and raceless academic identity believed "that if they adopt majority culture, they [would] be successful" (Columbus, 2006, p. 65).

Primary cultural and oppositional. Columbus described students holding a primary cultural and oppositional academic identity in terms of their combination of the primary cultural and oppositional academic identities. He believed these students maintained a minimum of stereotypical beliefs about Blacks, which Columbus considered indicative of a student with a primary cultural academic identity. Indicative of a student with an oppositional academic identity, these students considered their Black identity central and "that assimilating with White culture would not be a good thing for them" (Columbus, 2006, p. 69). Columbus found these students to exhibit results indicating: (a) positive identification with mastery goals, (b) high academic efficacy, (c) low performance approach goals, and (d) low performance avoidance

goals. He also found these students to not be disruptive nor adopt self-handicapping strategies.

Columbus considered primary cultural and oppositional students least likely to experience Steele's (1997) *stereotype threat*, which exists as a condition in which a student seeks and acts to not appear as, or become, a stereotype. The stereotype then becomes the *threat* (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). As a result, they experience the performance anxiety that typically contributes to decreased performance and their apparent adherence to, or personification of, the stereotype they found so threatening (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Put another way, a Black student desires to score in the 90th percentile on a standardized assessment to refute the stereotypical beliefs that she or he is ignorant because she or he is Black. While working to score in the 90th percentile, she or he places added stressors on self and, as a result, scores in the 70th percentile, which apparently justifies the stereotypes she or he so sought to avoid.

As mentioned earlier, Columbus considered Black students personifying a primary cultural academic identity to be the student America needed to produce. He reached this conclusion because of these students' abilities to "work hard in school for the survival of the 'race' and to honor themselves, their ancestors, family, [and] peers (Columbus, 2006, p. 26). He also reached this conclusion because these students' belief that their individual accomplishments contributed to the Black community's successes ant the student's "their overall well-being" Columbus, 2006, p. 27). The Black Self-Determination Experience did not seek to develop this academic identity, nor any other identity whether identified by Columbus's CCAM or not. The Experience simply sought to determine its impacts on participating students' academic identities as

measured by the CCAM. I hoped that gaining a better understanding of the Experience's impacts upon identity might enable future research to delve deeper into creating a particular Black student.

The Black Self-Determination Experience: Intervention and Procedures

Konrad et al. (2007) found self-determination interventions incorporating goal setting and goal attainment components best to increase student self-determination. Field and Hoffman (1994) believed self-determination to be rooted in an individual's knowing and valuing of self. Goff et al. (2007) found that Black students with clearly articulated postschool visions successfully navigated the burden of acting White and produced "productive" in-school and postschool academic and social outcomes, which the researchers believed resulted from the students' feelings of control over their educations and destinies. With this understanding, I developed The Black Self-Determination Experience, concentrating on Martin and Marshall's (1995) goal setting and goal attainment, to enhance participating students' self-awareness. To present the Experience, I first provide a broad overview. Then, I specifically detail The Black Self-Determination Experience in which I had the privilege to participate, witness, and experience. I do not refer to The Black Self-Determination Experience as a curriculum or research activity. I refer to it as an experience because, as Whiting (2006) alluded to, we cannot develop the empowered Black students necessary to address overrepresentation by exclusively concentrating on academics. To develop these Black students, we must concentrate on their academic, social, and emotional development. Also as Ryan and Deci (2000) believed, individuals must "experience their behavior to be self-determined" [italics added for emphasis] (p. 58). The Black Self-Determination

Experience concentrated on students' experiencing themselves as empowered self-determined beings in control of their education and destiny.

The Black Self-Determination Experience: A broad overview. I developed The Black Self-Determination Experience maintained the purpose for students to enhance their self-awareness and experience themselves as self-determined, which I hoped would result in the self-determination that some consider increased self-determination. I developed the Experience to include 11 specific meetings across two student groups, with each meeting designed to realize an individual purpose. Each group experienced the same meetings, which I hoped might provide them opportunities to practice and experience being self-determined. While developing the Experience, I employed a modified version of the participating secondary school's Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS). The school's PASS skills encompass a specific set of standards pertaining to a student's overall academic growth (see Appendix H for modified PASS objectives) and enabled me to establish a basic set of expectations. Table 12 presents a Black Self-Determination Experience meeting overview, which includes titles, PASS standards, approximate times, and individualized purposes. Table 12 includes the final meeting (meeting 22), which we used as a review and both groups attended.

Table 12

Black Self-Determination Experience Meetings

Meeting	Title	PASS Objectives	Time	Purpose
Meeting 1	Orientation	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive,	3 hours	Orientation

		expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.		
Meeting 2	The State of Today's Black Student	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Students will conduct research and organize information. ▪ Student will express ideas and opinions in a group situation. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and reflective modes. ▪ Students will read, construct meaning, and respond to a wide variety of literary forms. ▪ Student will express ideas and opinions in a group situation.	3 hours	Enhanced Self-awareness
Meeting 3	Academic Identity	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Students will conduct research and organize information. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.	3 hours	Enhanced Self-awareness
Meeting 4	Cultural Connectedness	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Student will express ideas and opinions in a group situation. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive,	3 hours	Enhanced Self-awareness

		expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.		
Meeting 5	Self-Determination	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Students will conduct research and organize information.	3 hours	Enhanced Self-Determination
Meeting 6	*Take Action*: Developing a Plan	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.	3 hours	Enhanced Goal Setting Skills
Meeting 7	*Take Action*: Goal Attainment	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.	3 hours	Enhanced Goal Attainment Skills
Meeting 8	Black Academic Identity	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Student will express ideas and opinions in a group situation. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.	3 hours	Enhanced Self-awareness
Meeting 9	Black Self-Determination	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive,	3 hours	Enhanced Self-awareness

Meeting 9	Black Self-Determination	▪ Student will listen for information. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.	3 hours	Enhanced Self-awareness
Meeting 10	Self-determination and academic identity	▪ Student will express ideas and opinions in a group situation. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.	2.6 hours	Enhanced Self-awareness, Self-Determination, and *Take Action* Skills
Meeting 11	The Black Self-Determination Experience	▪ Student will express ideas and opinions in a group situation. ▪ Student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, and reflective modes.	2.5 hours	Review
Meeting 12		▪ Student will express ideas and opinions in a group situation. ▪ Student will write for a	2.5 hours	Review

Note. Time is an approximation.

In general, each meeting followed the same format. First, we discussed the meeting's title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. We then reviewed the previous meeting. We did not do this step for meeting one, as there was nothing yet to review. Meetings three through eight each included content knowledge pre and post assessments. Meetings one, six, and 10 each included

AIR Self-Determination instruction, administration, and scoring. Meetings five and nine both included CCAM instruction, administration, and scoring. All meetings included at least one Black Self-Determination Experience diary entry. All meetings incorporated two distinct sessions separated by an hour lunch. I audio recorded each meeting, though due to recorder malfunction, was unable to retrieve meeting one's recording. We did, however, complete field notes for each meeting (see Appendix I for a copy of the observer and facilitator content and reflection field note template), which enabled me to reconstruct meeting one's activities. Field notes also enabled me to check for fidelity of instruction. Each meeting concluded with discussion and reflection time.

The Black Self-Determination Experience: A Detailed Description

The Black Self-Determination Experience's 12 distinct meetings each sought to realize the combined purpose of enhanced student self-awareness and providing the opportunities for students to experience self as self-determined and in control of their education and destiny. To realize this vision, I developed meetings in the sequential order I hoped might equate to a developmental process. For example, I developed meetings one through five to enhance students' self-awareness through their enhanced understanding of self and self in relation to the Black community. I developed meetings six through 11 to use this enhanced self-awareness to influence students to acquire the skills necessary to be a better self and community member. I devolved meeting 12 as a review. I now detail each individual meeting.

Meeting one content and procedures. The Black Self-Determination Experience's meeting one I developed with the purpose to orient students to the Black

Self-Determination Experience. This meeting incorporated a description of the Experience's overall (a) purpose, (b) expectations, (c) curriculum, (d) materials, (e) schedule, (f) location(s), (g) confidentiality, (h) time commitments, and (j) student commitment to fully engage self-exploration and their Black Self-Determination Experience. During meeting one, I delivered student portfolios (a folder where students might store materials), Black Self-Determination Experience diaries, and the supplies necessary to personalize portfolios and diaries. The diaries, or notebooks, I used as further triangulation. During this meeting, I also collected baseline data, which included administering content knowledge pre/post assessments and AIR Self-Determination Scale's Student and Parent Forms. Meeting one did not include a pre or post assessment, but did conclude with time for reflection and discussion.

Meeting one, which only included lesson one instruction and both groups one and two; we used to collect baseline data and lasted a total of four hours. The meeting opened, as did all meetings, with a description of its title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries and lasted approximately 15 minutes. Second, each student completed the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form, which lasted approximately 10 minutes. Third, I delivered the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form to students and asked that they return the completed forms to their next meetings, which lasted no longer than five minutes. Fourth, I administered the first three content knowledge pre and post assessments. To control for text fatigue, after each pre and post administration, which each lasted approximately five minutes, we took a 15 minute break and listened to music, discussed whatever appropriate topics the students raised, or toured our campus surroundings. During this time, I also scored

assessments and constructed a rudimentary graph on a piece of notebook paper. In all, each content knowledge pre/post assessment administration lasted approximately 25 minutes (75 minutes total). At that point, 105 minutes had elapsed.

I then separated students into one of two groups. To do so, I spoke face-to-face with parents beforehand, as they delivered their child to the university site, and determined the best time for their child to attend. Thereby, I acquired two equal groups of five students, though only two group one students and four group two students completed all Black Self-Determination Experience obligations. After separating groups, we had lunch, which lasted approximately 60 minutes. Thus, group one, which I administered only the first three content knowledge pre and post assessments, completed meeting one in approximately 165 minutes. They needed 30 minutes to complete the intro, AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form, and receive the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form. They needed 75 minutes to complete their three pre and post content knowledge assessments and 60 minutes to eat lunch.

Group two students, already having spent 165 minutes, spent another 75 minutes completing their final three content knowledge pre and post assessments and adhered to the same schedule as when completing the first three content knowledge assessments. In all, Group two students needed 240 minutes to complete meeting one. They needed 30 minutes to complete the intro, AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form, and receive the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form. They needed 75 minutes to complete their first three pre and post content knowledge assessments, 60 minutes to eat lunch, and another 75 minutes to complete content knowledge pre and post assessments four, five, and six.

Meeting one concluded with students creating two diary entries. First, I asked that they create a diary entry in which they discussed the PASS skills. Next, I asked that they create a diary entry in which they discussed their Black Self-Determination Experience expectations. Meeting one also concluded with students receiving a copy of *The Status and Trends in the Education of Blacks* (2004a) with the instructions to review the document and return to their next meeting having identified Black students' (a) graduation, (b) dropout, (c) college enrollment, (d) suspension, (e) expulsion, (f) grade retention, and (g) special education overrepresentation rates. I also asked that they identify Blacks' yearly income per educational level.

Meeting two content and procedures. Meeting two I developed as an opportunity for students to enhance their self-awareness through an enhanced understanding of the state of today's Black as articulated by *The Status and Trends in the Education of Blacks* (2004a). Meeting two needed approximately two 60-minute sessions to complete, which we separated by an hour lunch. Meeting two also included time for reflection and discussion.

Meeting two began with the corresponding content knowledge assessment. Next, we discussed the meeting's title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries, and reviewed meeting one. Second, I instructed students to place their completed AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Forms in their Black Self-Determination Experience portfolios. Third, in an audiotaped focus group, briefly discussed facts they found in *The Status and Trends in the Education of Blacks* associated with the Black students' students' (a) graduation, (b) dropout, (c) college enrollment, (d) suspension, (e) expulsion, (f) grade retention, (g) special education

overrepresentation rates, and (h) yearly income per educational level. We then had a 60 minute lunch, at which time, I left the audio recorder on and encouraged students to continue discussing other facts they found in the reading.

After lunch, in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group, we delivered our rendition of a presidential State of the Union Address and presented the state of today's Black student. I then instructed students to complete the content knowledge post assessment. Third, I provided students the correct response to their pre and post assessments and students scored assessments, compared their pre and post scores, and documented both in their diaries. Fourth, students created four diary entries, in which they (a) recorded the group's determination about the state of today's Black student, (b) described their feelings about the group's determination, (c) discussed their meeting two experience, and (d) identified real-world examples of individuals fitting facts found in *The Status and Trends in the Education of Blacks*. Finally, I provided students with Goff's (in-review) article and instructed them to review the document and identify (a) disproportional representation statistics, (b) disability categories presenting the most Black student overrepresentation, (c) disability category definitions, (d) in-school and postschool transition outcomes associated with Black students receiving special education services, (e) disproportional representation perpetuators, (f) proposed solutions to Black students' special education disproportional representation, and (g) reciprocal patterns associated with disproportional representation.

Meeting three content and procedures. Meeting three provided an opportunity for students to enhance their self-awareness through bettering their understanding the state of today's Black special education student as articulated by

Goff's (in-review) article. Meeting three needed approximately two 60-minute sessions to complete, which we separated by an hour lunch. Meeting two also included time for reflection and discussion.

Meeting three began with the corresponding content knowledge assessment. Next, we discussed the meeting's title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries, and reviewed meeting two. Third, in an audiotaped focus group, we briefly discussed the (a) disproportional representation statistics, (b) disability categories presenting the most Black student overrepresentation, (c) disability category definitions, (d) in-school and postschool outcomes associated with Black students receiving special education services, (e) disproportional representation perpetuators, (f) proposed solutions to Black students' special education disproportional representation, and (g) reciprocal patterns associated with disproportional representation found in Goff's (in-review) research article. We then had a 60 minute lunch, at which time, I left the audio recorder on and encouraged students to continue discussing other facts they found in the reading.

After lunch, in a 60-minute audiotaped focus group, we delivered our rendition of a presidential State of the Union Address and presented the state of today's Black special education student. I then instructed students to complete the content knowledge post assessment. Third, I provided students the correct response to their pre and post assessments and students scored assessments, compared their pre and post scores, and documented both in their diaries. Fourth, students created two diary entries, in which they recorded and expressed (a) their feelings about the group's determination about the state of today's Black student, and (b) their meeting two experience.

Meeting four content and procedures. The Black Self-Determination Experience's meeting four provided an opportunity for students to enhance their self-awareness through bettering their understanding of the burden of acting White's impacts upon a Black student's education. Meeting three needed approximately two 60-minute sessions to complete, which we separated by an hour lunch. Meeting two also included time for reflection and discussion.

Meeting four concentrated on academic identity as it related to Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting White. We opened the meeting by detailing its title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. Second, we reviewed meeting three. Third, students completed meeting four's content knowledge assessment. Fourth, I informed students about the burden of acting White's (a) definition, (b) fictive kinship, (c) history, (d) identity problems, (e) survival conflict, (f) associated postschool outcomes, and (g) Goff et al.'s (2007) conclusion that having a postschool vision enabled students to successfully navigate the burden of acting White. We then had a 60 minute lunch, at which time, I left the audio recorder on and encouraged students to continue discussing other facts they found in the reading.

After lunch, in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group, we discussed the aforementioned burden of acting White information. Next, I instructed students to complete the post content knowledge assessment. Third, I provided students the correct response to their pre and post assessments and students scored assessments, compared their pre and post scores, and documented both in their diaries. Fourth, students created two diary entries, in which they discussed (a) their feelings about the burden of acting White and (b) their meeting four experiences. Lastly, I instructed students to go home

and discuss the burden of acting White with family members and create a diary entry detailing these discussions.

Meeting five content and procedures. I developed The Black Self-Determination Experience's meeting five as an opportunity for students to enhance their self-awareness through better understanding their academic identity as it related to Columbus's (2006) CCAM. Meeting five needed approximately two 60-minute sessions to complete, which we separated by an hour lunch. Meeting five also included time for reflection and discussion.

Meeting five opened with a detailed description of its title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. Second, we reviewed meeting four. Third, students completed meeting five's content knowledge pre assessment. Fourth, I administered the CCAM. Fifth, students scored their CCAMs and determined their academic identities. Sixth, through DI, I discussed each of the CCAM's academic identities and each identity's associated characteristics including its most likely academic outcomes. Students copied notes in their diaries. We then had a 60 minute lunch, at which time, I left the audio recorder on and encouraged students to continue discussing the CCAM, characteristics of each of its academic identities, and their individual academic identity.

After lunch, in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group, I instructed students to determine a "celebrity" that fit each identity. We then discussed these determinations in regards to who and why they chose the particular individual. During the focus group, we also discussed our individual CCAM results in regards to (a) our identity, (b) characteristics of this identity and if they fit our understanding of self, (c) the identity

we believed we had before understanding our results, and (d) the identity we wished we had. Third, students completed meeting five's content knowledge post assessment. Fourth, I provided students the correct response to their pre/post assessments and students scored assessments, compared their pre and post scores, and documented both in their diaries. Finally, students created two diary entries. First students discussed their feelings about the CCAM and its results. Second, students created a diary entry in which they discussed their meeting five experiences.

Meeting six content and procedures. I developed meeting six as an opportunity for students to enhance their self-awareness through an enhanced understanding of their self-determination levels as identified by the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student and Parent Forms. Meeting six maintained the purpose for students to better understand Self-Determination including its (a) historic connections to enslaved Africans in America, (b) definitions (c) Martin and Marshall's (1995) self-determination behaviors and artifact, (d) potential impacts on their in-school and postschool outcomes, (e) relationships with the Black student, and (f)) their self-determination levels as articulated by themselves and their parents/guardian. Meeting six needed approximately two 60-minute sessions to complete, which we separated by an hour lunch. Meeting six also included time for reflection and discussion.

Meeting six opened with a detailed description of its title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. Second, we reviewed meeting five. Third, students completed meeting six's content knowledge pre assessment. Fourth, through DI, I discussed self-determination's (a) historic connections to enslaved Africans in America, (b) definitions (c) Martin and Marshall's

(1995) self-determination behaviors and artifact, (d) potential impacts on their in-school and postschool transition outcomes, (e) relationships with the Black student, (f)) their self-determination levels as articulated by themselves and their parents/guardian, and (g) the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student and Parent Forms' scores' relevance, validity, and meaning. I specifically concentrated on stressing Franklin's (1984) self-determination definition and Coleman Report (1968). During DI, students copied notes in their diaries. We then had a 60 minute lunch, at which time, I left the audio recorder on and encouraged students to continue discussing self-determination.

After lunch, I instructed students to retrieve their AIR Self-Determination Scale Student and Parent Forms from their portfolios. Second, I instructed students to score both their AIR Self-Determination Scale Student and Parent Forms and determine their self-determination levels as articulated by themselves and their parents/guardian. Third, in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group, we discussed our self-determination levels. Fourth, I instructed students to complete meeting six's content knowledge post assessment. Fifth, I provided students the correct response to their pre and post assessments and students scored assessments, compared their scores, and documented both in their diaries. Sixth, students created two diary entries in which they discussed their (a) self-determination levels and (b) feelings about meeting six. Finally, as homework, I instructed students to identify and research a Black individual they believed to be self-determined and create a diary entry where they discussed why they chose that individual and how she or he demonstrated self-determination.

Meeting seven content and procedures. I developed meeting seven as an opportunity for students to practice being self-determined and experience themselves as

self-determined through practicing the *Choice Maker's Choosing Goals and Take Action*. The *Choosing Goals* concentrates on goal setting and emphasizes the self-awareness and decision-making necessary to identify one's interests, skills, strengths, needs, and goals and the decision-making necessary to develop a plan to achieve one's goal. The *Take Action* curriculum includes the self-advocacy, independent performance, self-evaluation, and adjustment necessary to achieve one's goal. Meeting seven's purpose resided in students exiting with an identified manageable short-term goal that they could conceivably achieve by their next meeting and the plan they would use to achieve this short-term goal. Meeting seven needed approximately two 60-minute sessions to complete, which we separated by an hour lunch. Meeting seven also included time for reflection and discussion.

Meeting seven opened with a detailed description of its title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. Second, we reviewed meeting six. Third, students completed meeting seven's content knowledge pre assessment. Fourth, through DI, I discussed and demonstrated Martin and Marshall's (1995) *Choosing Goals* and *Take Action* processes, while students copied notes in their diaries. We then had a 60-minute lunch.

After lunch, I instructed students to use the *Breaking Down Goals* worksheet (see Appendix J for worksheet) to identify a long-term goal. Second, I instructed students to "break" their long-term goal down into the short-term goal they could achieve by their next meeting. Third, I instructed students to use the *Take Action* page 1 worksheet to create the plan they would use to achieve their short-term goals. Fourth, after students identified their (a) standard, (b) motivation, (c) strategy, (d) schedule, (e)

supports, and (f) feedback, I instructed students to use *Take Action's* Plan Critique worksheet to edit their plans. Fifth, I instructed students to complete the content knowledge post assessment. Sixth, I provided students the correct response to their assessments and students scored assessments, compared their pre and post scores, and documented both in their diaries. Seventh, students created two diary entries in which they discussed the *Choosing Goals* process, including their short-term goals and (b) their feelings about meeting seven. Finally, I instructed students, as homework, to actively and independently perform to accomplish their short-term goal by the next meeting.

Meeting eight content and procedures. I developed meeting eight as an opportunity for students to practice being self-determined and experience themselves as self-determined through practicing *Choice Maker's Take Action*. We employed the *Take Action* curriculum to concentrate on goal attainment. Goal attainment focuses on students independently performing the acts necessary to accomplish their plans and realize their visions. It also involves students self-evaluating to determine if they completed their plans and achieved their goals and adjusting (learning) their plans an/or goals as necessary. Meeting eight's purpose resided in students independently performing and practicing decision-making, self-evaluation, and adjusting. Meeting eight needed approximately two 60-minute sessions to complete, which we separated by an hour lunch. Meeting eight also included time for reflection and discussion.

Meeting eight opened with a detailed description of its title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. Second, we reviewed meeting seven. Third, students completed meeting eight's content knowledge pre

assessment. Fourth, through DI, I discussed and demonstrated Martin and Marshall's (1995) goal attainment process. During this instruction, students copied notes in their diaries. We then had a 60-minute lunch.

After lunch, I instructed students to use *Take Action's* Page 2 worksheet to determine if they achieved their short-term goals. In the process, students had to self-evaluate their (a) standard, (b) motivation, (c) strategy, (d) schedule, (e) support, and (f) feedback. The worksheet then asks students to adjust their plans to promote future success. Afterwards, in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group, each student discussed his or her Page 2 worksheet results, which included whether or not if they achieved their short-term goal. Students then completed meeting eight's content knowledge post assessment. I then provided students the correct response to their assessments and students scored assessments, compared their pre and post scores, and documented both in their diaries. Students next created two diary entries. First students discussed their goal attainment process including their goals. Second, students shared their feelings about their meeting eight experiences. Finally, I instructed students not attaining their goals to independently perform to accomplish their goals by their next meeting and those who accomplished their goals to repeat the Take Action process by their next meeting.

Meeting nine content and procedures. I developed meeting nine as an opportunity for students to enhance their self-awareness through an enhanced understanding of their academic identity post their Black Self-Determination Experience. Meeting nine maintained the purpose for students to (a) complete the CCAM (b) compare their pre and post CCAM academic identities, and (c) determine

the Black Self-Determination Experience's impacts upon their identities. We conducted meeting nine over two sessions, which together lasted approximately 160-minutes (the 1st session approximately 30 minutes, the 2nd approximately 70 minutes, and lunch lasted approximately 60 minutes). Meeting nine also included time for reflection and discussion, but did not include a content knowledge pre or post assessment.

Meeting nine opened with a detailed description of its title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. Second, we reviewed meeting eight and five (the first CCAM administration). Third, I administered the CCAM. Fourth, students scored their CCAMs and determined their academic identities. Fifth, I instructed students to retrieve their meeting five CCAMs and compare the two. We then had a 60-minute lunch.

After lunch, in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group, I instructed students to (a) share their first CCAM identity, (b) share their second CCAM identity, (c) discuss one another's identity and if they believed the identity fit, (d) compare their pre and post Black Self-Determination Experience CCAM identities, (e) share the influence they believe their Experience had upon their identity, and (f) pose unresolved questions. Afterwards, students created five diary entries. First, they shared their CCAM identity before and after their Experience. Second, students shared the identity they wished they had. Third, students shared their beliefs about the CCAM's accuracy. Fourth, students shared their beliefs about their Experience's potential influence upon their academic identity. Fifth, they shared their meeting nine experience. To conclude, I provided students a copy of the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form and asked that they

have the same parent/guardian, who completed the first Parent form, rate their self-determination level and return the form to their next meeting.

Meeting 10 content and procedures. I developed meeting 10 as an opportunity for students to enhance their self-awareness through an enhanced understanding of their self-determination post their Black Self-Determination Experience. Meeting 10 maintained the purpose for students to (a) complete and score the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form, (b) to score the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form, (c) continue learning about their self-determination levels, and (d) pose unresolved questions. Meeting 10 needed approximately two 60-minute sessions to complete, which we separated by an hour lunch. Meeting 10 also included time for reflection and discussion.

Meeting 10 opened with a detailed description of its title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. Second, we reviewed meeting nine. We also reviewed meetings' one and six to reconnect with our self-determination understanding. Third, I administered the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form. Fourth, students scored their AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Forms and determined their self-determination level as articulated by themselves. Fifth, I instructed students to retrieve and score their AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Forms to determine their self-determination levels as articulated by their parent/guardian. We then had a 60-minute lunch.

After lunch, in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group, I instructed students to (a) share their first student and parent/guardian self-determination levels, (b) share their second student and parent/guardian self-determination levels, (c) discuss one another's

student and parent/guardian self-determination levels and if they believed the levels fit, (d) compare their pre and post Black Self-Determination Experience student and parent/guardian self-determination levels, (e) share the influence they believed their Experience had upon their student and parent/guardian self-determination levels, and (f) pose unresolved questions. Afterwards, students created three diary entries. First, they shared their student and parent/guardian self-determination levels before and after their Experience. Second, students shared their beliefs about how their Experience's potential influence upon their student and parent/guardian self-determination levels. Third, students documented their meeting 10 experiences.

Meeting 11 content and procedures. I developed meeting 11 as a conclusion. Meeting 11 maintained the purpose for me to review The Black Self-Determination Experience and for students to engage in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group where they discussed their Experience and posed any unresolved questions. Meeting 11 needed two sessions (1st approximately 30 minutes and the 2nd approximately 60 minutes) and approximately 150 minutes to complete. We separated the two sessions by an hour lunch and concluded with reflection and discussion time. Meeting eleven did not include a content pre or post assessment.

Meeting eleven opened with a discussion about the meeting's, and overall Experience's, title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. Second, we reviewed all our Experience documents to check for completion and accuracy. We then had a 60-minute lunch. After lunch, in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group, we discussed our overall Black Self-Determination Experience. During this focus group, we concentrated on student beliefs about the Experience's potential

influence upon their (a) content knowledge pre and post assessment scores, (b) AIR Self-Determination student and parent/guardian levels, (c) CCAM academic identity, and (d) past, present, and future goal setting and goal attainment. We also shared students' feelings about the Experience's benefits to (a) themselves, (b) their parents/guardian, and (c) other individuals. Afterwards, students created two diary entries. First, they shared their feelings about their overall Black Self-Determination Experience. Second, they shared their feelings about their meeting eleven experience.

Meeting 12 content and procedures. I developed meeting 12 as a conclusion to include all students and to engage in a 60 minute audiotaped focus group where students discussed their Experience and posed any unresolved questions. Meeting 12 needed two sessions (1st approximately 25 minutes and the 2nd approximately 60 minutes) and approximately 145 minutes to complete. We separated the two sessions by an hour lunch and concluded with reflection and discussion time. Meeting eleven did not include a content pre or post assessment. Meeting 12 opened with a discussion about the meeting's, and overall Experience's, title, purpose, and associated PASS skills, which students copied in their diaries. Second, we reviewed all our Experience documents to check for completion and accuracy and to make copies of the materials (I kept a copy and the student kept a copy). We then had an hour lunch. After lunch, in a 60-minute audiotaped focus group, we each had the opportunity to share our very own Black Self-Determination Experience. Meeting 12 concluded with students creating a diary entry in which they shared their overall Black Self-Determination Experience.

Instructional Fidelity

To ensure fidelity of instruction, I recruited an independent observer who worked at the participating university as an administrative assistant. Before conducting any Black Self-Determination Experience meetings, we met and reviewed each meeting's outline, lesson plan, curriculum, activities, student obligations, PASS objectives, purposes, field notes template, observer checklists (see Appendix K for sample checklist), and all research protocols. We then developed the strategy we used to determine if I, the facilitator, held true to the instructional procedures. Our strategy included audio recording each meeting, though a recorder malfunction rendered meeting one's recording obsolete. Initially, the observer physically attended and observed meeting one to determine the soundness of our strategy and acquire a better understanding of students, setting, and overall procedures to assist with reviewing audio recorded meetings. At meeting one's conclusion, we determined our strategy to be sound.

At the end of the Experience, the observer transcribed each meeting's recordings while checking for instructional fidelity. Thus, the observer and I reviewed 100% of all meetings (the observer physically observed meeting one) and found 100% instructional fidelity. In other words, I conducted the Experience as planned.

Interobserver Agreement

The independent rater reviewed all products and checked for scoring accuracy. To determine interobserver agreement I used the "exact" agreement as outlined by Kennedy (2005). Exact agreement returns the percent of agreements, or correctly scored products. An agreement occurred when the observer and I both "agreed" upon

the scoring accuracy of a dependent variable. A disagreement occurred when our scores contradicted one another. To calculate agreement, I divided the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements and multiplied this number by 100. The inter-rater scoring agreement was 100%. In other words, the dependent variables were all correctly scored though this process included adjusting multiple student mathematical calculations.

To determine interobserver agreement, I used I "exact" agreement as outlined by Kennedy (2005). Exact agreement returns the percent of agreements, or correctly scored products. An agreement occurred when the observer and I both "agreed" upon the scoring accuracy of a dependent variable. A disagreement occurred when our scores contradicted one another. To calculate exact agreement, I used the interval agreement formula, which I calculated interval agreement (i.e. adherence to lesson plan) by dividing the number of agreements by the number of disagreements and multiplied this number by 100. I, nor the observer, found any disagreements. Thus, we determined our interobserver agreement to be 100%. In other words, we believed all variables to have been scored accurately.

Social Validity

Social validity relates to a judgment of a research's quality in regards to its (a) social importance, (b) purpose's significance, and the (c) appropriateness of its procedures (Mertens, 2005). I established social validity via four distinct methods. First, each meeting concluded with students documenting their reactions/feelings to that meeting. Second, throughout the Experience, I incorporated inquires designed to elicit students' beliefs about the Experience's social importance, the significance of its

purpose, and the appropriateness of its procedures. For example, I asked student whether they believed other students might benefit from a Black Self-Determination Experience. Third, students throughout the Experience commented about the Experience's value, potential benefits, and their hopes that others receive the Experience. I documented these comments and found that students expressed regret that their friends did not receive the Experience and openly discussed the need for other students to have this same Experience. Many even discussed the need to make the Experience available to others. Finally, the gratitude I received from parents and students served to socially validate the Experience as socially important with a significant purpose and conducted with the appropriate procedures.

Data Analysis

To answer research questions, I primarily used (a) visual analysis, (b) descriptive statistics, and (c) the phenomenology's systematic analysis and interpretation.

Quantitative analysis. Research questions one through four and eight dictated a multielement with an equivalent non-intervention baseline design. To analyze quantitative data, I sought functional relations, or "a consistent effect on a dependent variable by systematically manipulating an independent variable" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 28). The multielement with an equivalent non-intervention baseline design relies on response differences to establish a functional relation (Kennedy, 2005). In other words, the differences in student pre and post percent of correct responses demonstrates the Experience's potential impacts upon their content knowledge acquisition. To analyze functional relations, I used visual data analysis, which includes "using graphs to

visualize different aspects of data so researches can arrive at a better understanding of the nature of their findings" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 206-207). Visual analysis enabled me to explore data as the "experiment" happened, which enabled me to make informed decisions and adjust accordingly. Through visual analysis, I examined data trends, or the "best-fit" straight line that most reflects data points, which enabled me to better understand data patterns (Kennedy, 2005). While examining data trends, I checked for slope, or the data's slant or inclination, which can be positive, flat, or negative (Kennedy, 2005). Visual analysis enabled me to explore and articulate my results and delve into results and ascertain Kennedy's (2005) "deeper understanding of the nature of . . . [my] . . . findings" (p. 217). I also used a one-sample t test to determine mean differences and effect size (Green & Salkind, 2005).

Qualitative analysis. I employed an empirical phenomenological qualitative design to address research questions five through eight. To analyze qualitative data, I conducted analysis and interpretation. Analysis consists of (a) "working" with data, (b) organizing data, (c) deconstructing data into smaller more manageable components, (d) coding data, (e) synthesizing data, and (f) searching for themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Interpretation involves developing ideas and linking these ideas to concerns presented in literature. From this point forward I refer to this procedure as interpretation because I understand interpretation to encompass analysis and dissemination.

To interpret qualitative data while still collecting data, I adhered to Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) "suggestions" for analyzing and interpreting data. During data collection, I first coded initial data (e.g. observations and field notes). Second, I developed an initial set of themes. Third, I developed inquires that I then presented to

students for verification, which narrowed my focus. Fourth, I documented my comments, results, and the knowledge I gained, which then guided further investigations. Fifth, I once again developed inquires that I presented to students for verification. Sixth, I revisited research and literature to familiarize myself with concerns, past findings, and compared and contrasted my findings. Seventh, I asked myself, "what does it remind me of" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 157). I asked this question to allow myself the freedom to generalize to other settings, which then enabled me to open my mind to various and diverse understandings.

To interpret data after completing data collection, I adhered to Mertens (2005) systematic and comprehensive "steps." First, I read all data (i.e., transcripts, diary entries, and field notes) and compartmentalized data into smaller more manageable components. Second, I developed initial thoughts/themes. Third, I identified relationships, patterns, and distinctions. Fourth, I met with an independent observer who transcribed audiotapes and conducted a similar analysis process to verify themes and findings. I did this to ensure that I did not see what I wanted to see. Finally, I examined and solidified the validity of themes in relation to findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: Results

I conducted the Black Self-Determination Experience to achieve four distinct goals that together realize a shared vision. First, I sought to better understand the Experience's influences upon student learning of central Black Experience knowledge content knowledge. Second, I sought to better understand the Experience's abilities to enhance the self-determination of Black students regardless of their special education status. Third, I sought to better understand the Experience's influences upon a Black student's academic identity. Fourth, I sought to contribute to the Special Education field, and America's entire educational system for that matter, through addressing the Black students' disempowerment and empowerment, for disempowerment and empowerment seem to undergird most discussions about the Black students' educational concerns but also seem to remain most silent. Overall, I sought to realize the vision of better understanding the Experience's abilities to enhance a Black student's self-awareness and, in the process, empower a Black student to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their education and destiny.

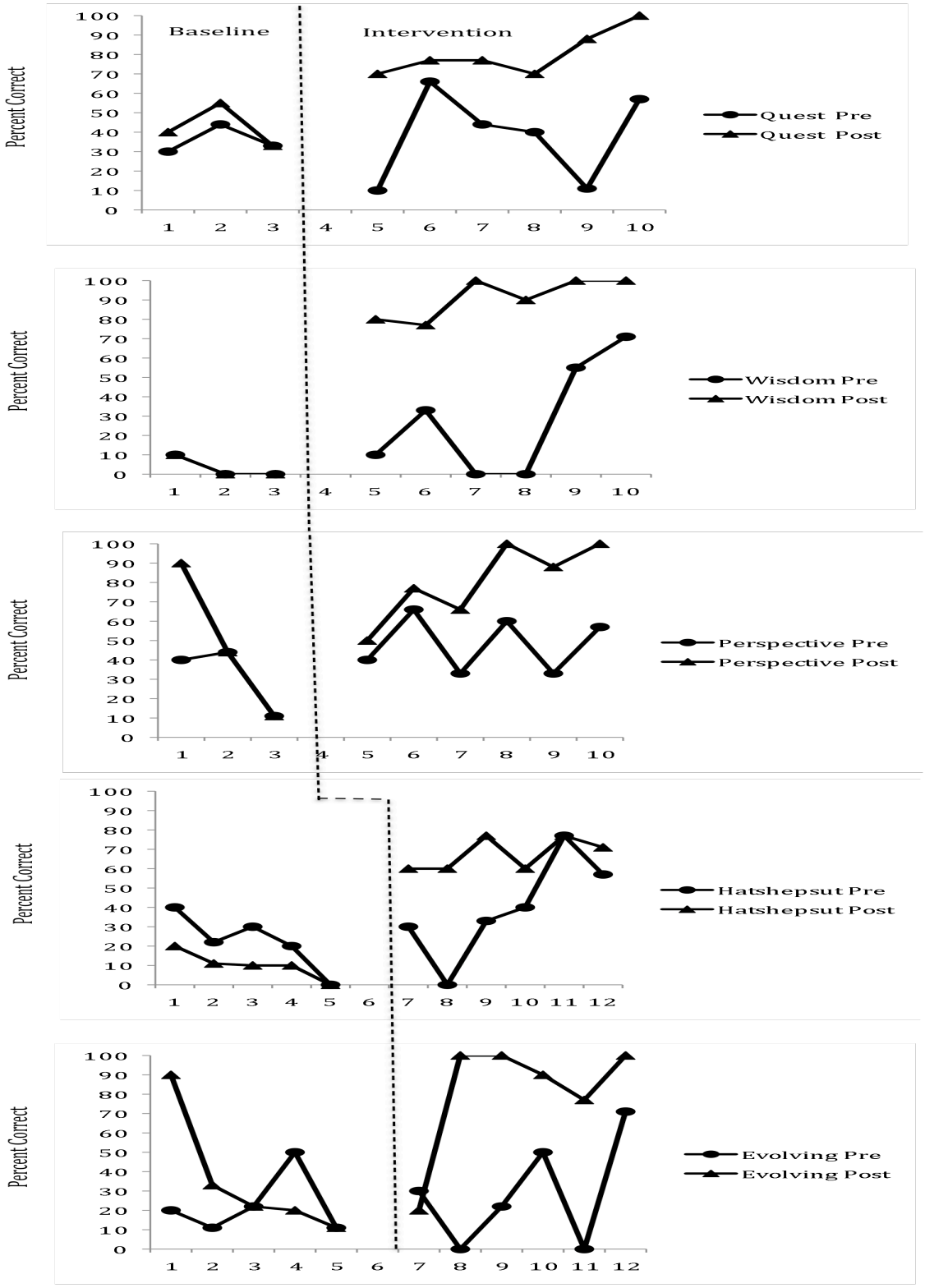
I discuss findings in relation to individual research questions and the overall vision of enhanced student self-awareness. To enhance student self-awareness, the Experience concentrated on students' learning (a) knowledge central to their Experience, (b) self-determination's influences upon their education and destinies, (c) their academic identity and its influences upon their education and destinies, and (d) about their Black Self-Determination Experience. While disseminating findings, I hope to convey the Experience's promise for enhancing a Black student's self-awareness, learning, self-determination, and academic identity, while empowering them to address

their special education overrepresentation, in spite of the American society in which they live.

Research Question 1: What influences might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on student content knowledge scores?

The Black Self-Determination Experience's initial research question sought to better understand the its potential influence upon students' learning knowledge central to their Experience. As depicted in Figure 1, each student presented a stable or decreasing baseline. After intervention began, four students demonstrated an immediate large level change, followed by the fifth student on the intervention's second day. Each student's posttest sore level change remained high throughout the remainder of his or her Experience. Pretest scores showed a gradual increase, yet for the most part, always remained noticeably lower than posttest scores. The multi-element design illustrates the Experience's positive influence upon student learning of knowledge central to their Experience, which the replicated large level change across all five students and this increase's continuation of substantially higher posttest scores throughout the intervention phase demonstrates. To further analyze results, I now examine individual students.

Figure 1. Student Percent of Correct Responses



Quest. During baseline, Quest obtained pretest percent correct scores of 30%, 44%, and 33%, which equate to a mean of 36%. He obtained posttest percent correct scores of 40%, 55%, and 33%, which equate to a mean of 43%. After intervention began, his posttest performance immediately increased and his results illustrate a large level change ranging from 70% to 100%, with one perfect posttest score. His intervention pretest percent of correct responses ranged from 10% to 66% and always remained below his posttest percentages.

Wisdom. During baseline, Wisdom obtained percent correct scores of 10%, 0%, and 0% (represented by 1 line), which equate to a mean of 3%. After intervention began, his posttest performance immediately increased and his results demonstrate a large level change ranging from 77% to 100%, with three perfect posttest scores. His intervention pretest percent of correct responses ranged from 0% to 71% and was always remained well below his posttest percentages.

Perspective. During baseline, Perspective obtained pretest percent correct scores of 40%, 44%, and 11%, which equate to a mean of 32%. He obtained posttest percentages of 90%, 44%, and 11%, which equate to a mean of 48%. After intervention began, his posttest performance immediately increased and his results reflect a large level change ranging from 50% to 100%, with two perfect posttest scores. His pretest percent correct scores ranged from 33% to 66% and always remained below his posttest percentages.

Hatshepsut. During baseline, Hatshepsut obtained pretest percent correct scores of 40%, 22%, 30%, 20%, and 0%, which equate to a mean of 22%. She obtained posttest percentages of 20%, 11%, 10%, 10%, and 0%, which equate to a mean of 10%.

Her posttest scores represent a decrease. After intervention began, her posttest performance immediately increased and her results indicate a large level change ranging from 60% to 77%. Her intervention pretest percent correct scores ranged from 0% to 77% and, at all but one point, remained below her posttest percentages.

Evolving. During baseline, Evolving obtained pretest percent correct scores of 20%, 11%, 22%, 50%, and 11%, which equate to a mean of 23%. He obtained posttest percentages of 90%, 33%, 22%, 20%, and 11%, which equate to a mean of 35%. After his second day of intervention, his posttest performance immediately increased. His results indicate a large level change ranging from 0% to 100%, with three perfect posttest scores. His intervention pretest percent correct scores ranged form 0% to 71% and, after his first day, always remained well below his posttest percentages.

Research Question 2: What influences might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on AIR student self-determination scores?

The Black Self-Determination Experience's second research question sought to better understand the Experience's potential influence upon student self-determination scores, as measured by the AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form. Figure 2 presents AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form baseline and intervention means, which include all five students. Figure 2 depicts students' mean baseline self-determination level as 83% and their intervention level as 84%, which indicates a 1% increase. A one-sample t test indicated no statistical difference between baseline and intervention means and a vey weak effect size (d = .128).

Figure 2. AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form Baseline and Intervention Means

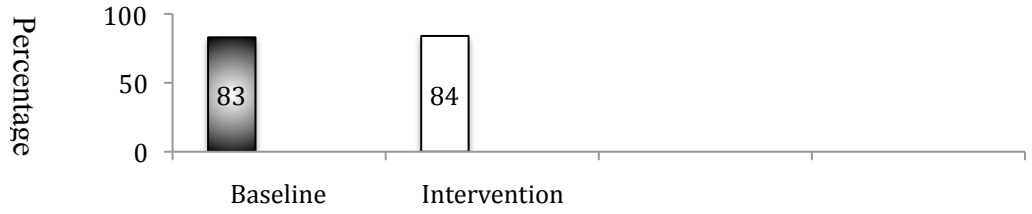


Figure 3. Figure 3 presents individual baseline (pre) and intervention (post) AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form scores. As evidenced in Figure 3, all students reported baseline self-determination scores ranging from 78 (65%) to 91 (76%). During intervention, students reported similar self-determination scores ranging from 78 (65%) to 89 (74%). Individually, Quest reported a 4 point increase from 82 (68%) to 86 (72%). Wisdom reported a 1 point increase from 85 (71%) to 86 (72%). Hatshepsut reported that her self-determination level increased from 81 (68%) to 89 (74%), which indicates an 8 increase. Perspective, at 78 (65%), reported no change in his self-determination level. Evolving reported a 10 point decrease from 91 (76%) to 81 (68%).

Figure 3. Individual AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form Scores

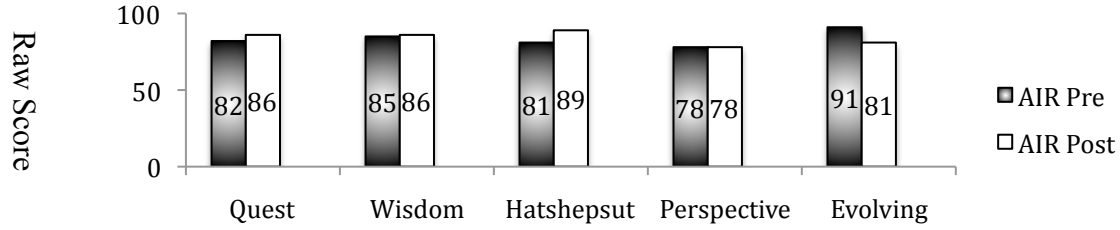
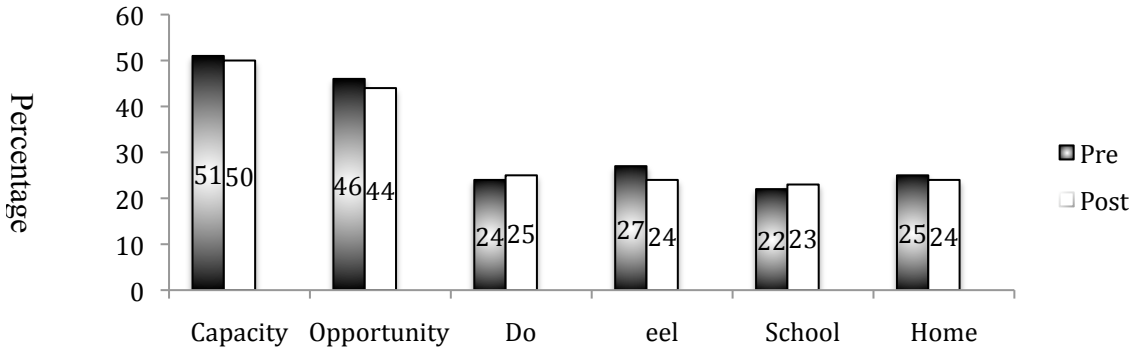


Figure 4. A closer examination of student AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form group means provides a more detailed depiction. Figure 4 reflects group means in regards to (a) capacity, (b) opportunity, (c) things I do, (d) how I feel, (e) what happens at school, and (f) what happens at home. As evidenced in Figure 4, students

indicated a 1 point decrease in their beliefs about their capacity to self-determine. Figure 4 indicates a 2 point increase in students' beliefs about their opportunities to self-determine. Figure 4 reflects a 1 point increase in students' self-determined acts. Figure 4 indicates a 3 point decrease in students' feelings about their self-determination. Figure 4 indicates a 1 point increase in students' beliefs about their opportunities to self-determine at school and a 1 point decrease in their beliefs about their opportunities to self-determine at home.

Figure 4. AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form Group Means

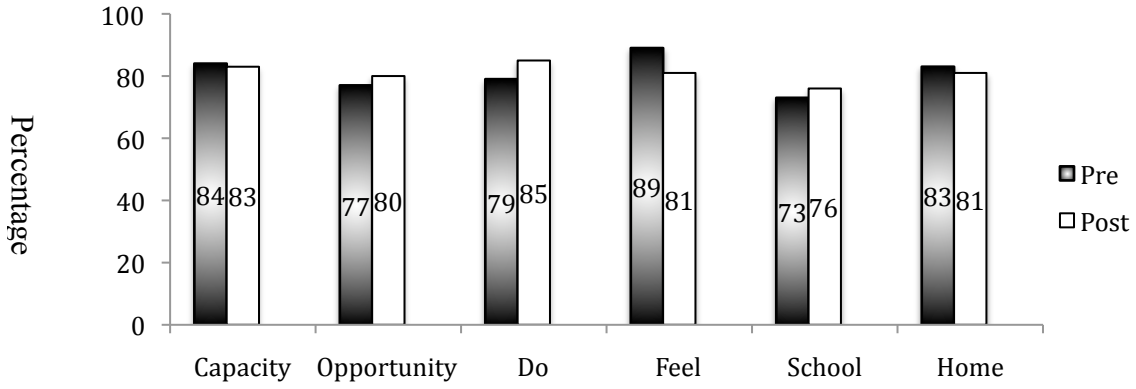


Note. Capacity and Opportunity bars have a maximum score of 60. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Figure 5. Figure 5 represents Figure 4's group baseline (pre) and intervention (post) means as percentages, which provides another examination of student AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form results. To make this calculation, I summed each student's scores, per category, which resulted in a raw score. I then divided this raw score by the maximum possible score. This computation resulted in a group mean score as a percentage for each category. For example, students' baseline individual scores in relation to their Opportunity when summed together resulted in a raw score of 232. I then divided this score by 300 (the maximum possible score if each scored their level as 60), which resulted in a group mean score of 77%. This conversion illustrates that

students held fairly high beliefs about their capacities (84% pre and 83% post) and opportunities (77% pre and 80% post) to self-determine. Students indicated a 6% increase in their beliefs about their self-determined acts (79% pre and 85% post). However, they presented an 8% decrease in their feelings of being self-determined (89% pre and 81% post). Figure 5 demonstrates that students presented a 3% increase in opportunities to self-determine at school (73% pre and 76% post) and a 2% decrease in their opportunities to self-determine at home (83% pre and 81% post).

Figure 5. AIR Self-Determination Student Scale Group Means as Percentages

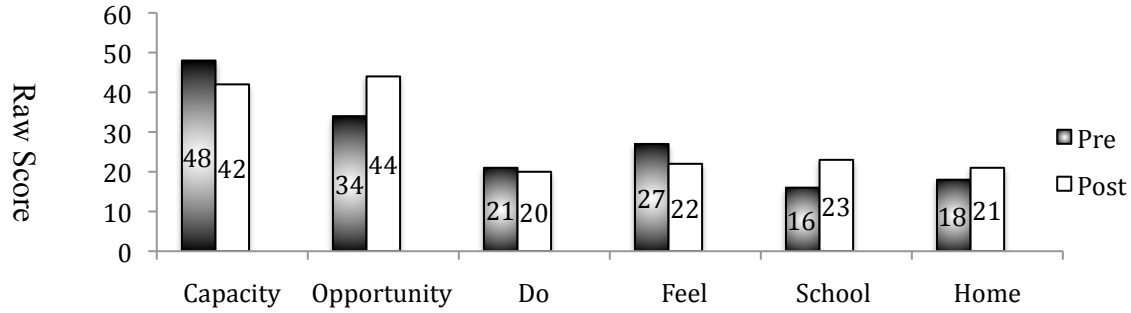


For a more thorough examination, I include Figures 6 through 10. These Figures reflect individual student baseline (pre) and intervention (post) AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form results in relation to (a) capacity, (b) opportunity, (c) things I do, (d) how I feel, and (e) what happens at school and home scores. I include these figures to illustrate the Experience's influence upon individual components of each student's AIR student self-determination levels.

Figure 6. Figure 6 presents Quest's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Scores. As evidenced in the Figure, Quest presented a 4 point decrease in his belief about his capacities to self-determine. He presented a 10% increase in his belief about

his opportunities to self-determine. His scores further indicate an increase of (a) 1 point increase in his self-determined acts, (b) 7 point in his opportunities to self-determine at school, and (c) 3 point in his opportunities to self-determine at home. His scores reflect a 5 point decrease in his feelings about his self-determination knowledge and skills.

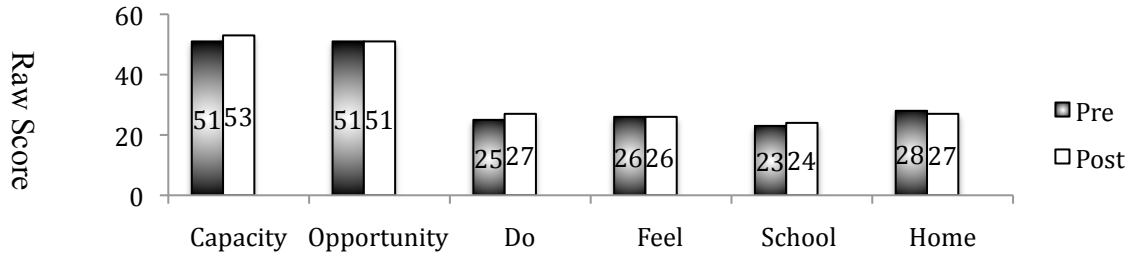
Figure 6. Quest's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Scale Scores



Note. Capacity and Opportunity bars have a maximum score of 60. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Figure 7. Figure 7 presents Wisdom's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student scores. As evidenced in the Figure, Wisdom presented a 2 point increase in his belief about his capacities to self-determine. He presented no change in his belief about his opportunities to self-determine. His scores indicate a 2 point increase in his self-determined acts, though his scores reflect no change in his feelings about his self-determination knowledge and skills. Wisdom's scores reflect a 1 point decrease in his opportunities to self-determine at school and a 1 point increase in his opportunities to self-determine at home.

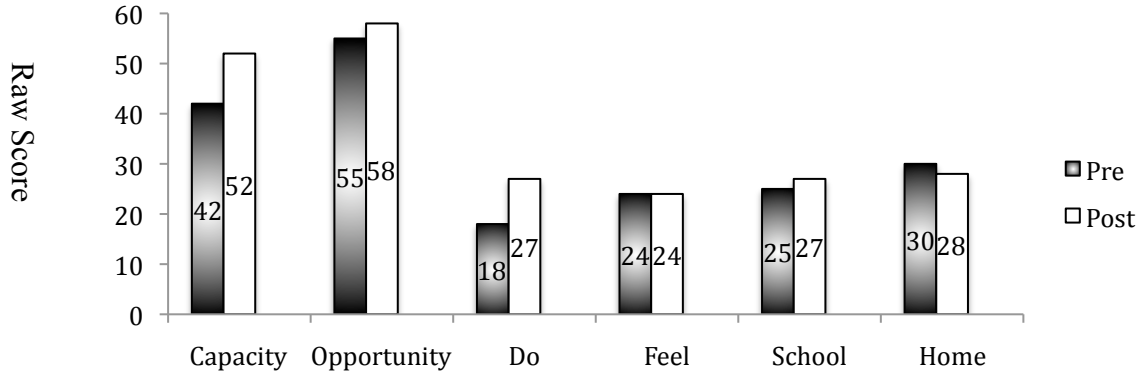
Figure 7. Wisdom's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Scale Scores



Note. Capacity and Opportunity bars have a maximum score of 60. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Figure 8. Figure 8 presents Hatshepsut's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student scores. As evidenced in the Figure, Hatshepsut presented a 10 point increase in her belief about her capacities to self-determine. She presented a 3 point increase in her belief about her opportunities to self-determine. Her scores indicate a 9 point increase in her self-determined acts, though her scores reflect no change in her feelings about her self-determination knowledge and skills. Hatshepsut further indicated a 2 point increase in her opportunities to self-determine at school and a 2 point decrease in her opportunities to self-determine at home.

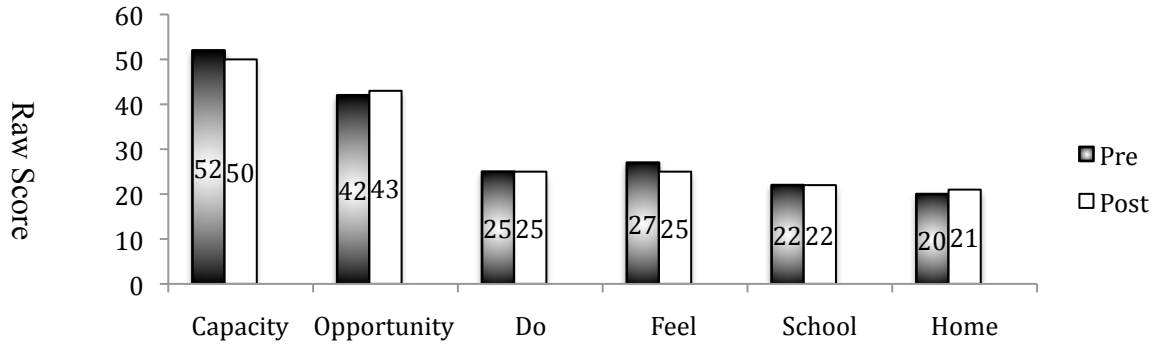
Figure 8. Hatshepsut's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Scale Scores



Note. Capacity and Opportunity bars have a maximum score of 60. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Figure 9. Figure 9 presents Perspective's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student scores. As evidenced in the Figure, Perspective presented a 2 point decrease in his belief about his capacities to self-determine. He presented a 1 point increase in his belief about his opportunities to self-determine. His scores reflect no change in his self-determined acts, though his scores reflect a 6 point decrease his feelings about his self-determination knowledge and skills. Perspective indicated no change in his opportunities to self-determine at school and a 1 point increase in his opportunities to self-determine at home.

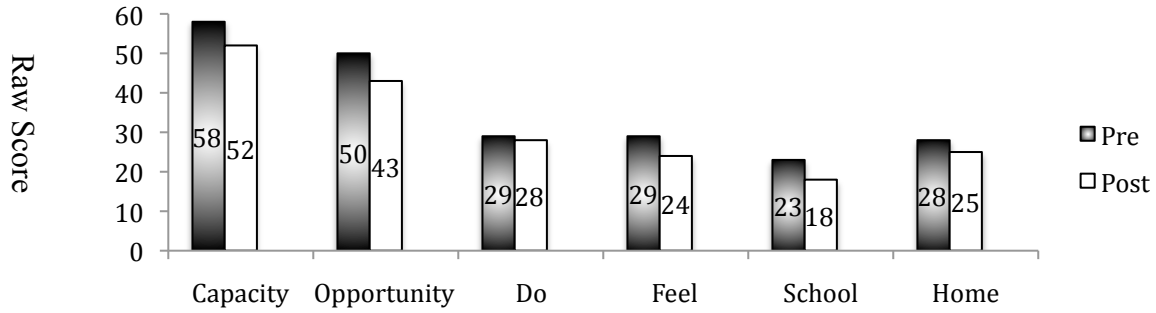
Figure 9. Perspective's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Scores



Note. Capacity and Opportunity bars have a maximum score of 60. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Figure 10. Figure 10 presents Evolving's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student scores. As evidenced in the Figure, Evolving presented a 6 point decrease in his belief about his capacities to self-determine and a 7 point decrease in his belief about his opportunities to self-determine. His scores reflect a 1% increase in his self-determined acts, though his scores reflect a 5 point decrease his feelings about his self-determination knowledge and skills. Evolving indicated a 5 point decrease in his opportunities to self-determine at school and a 3 point decrease in his opportunities to self-determine at home.

Figure 10. Evolving's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Scores



Note. Capacity and Opportunity bars have a maximum value of 60. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum value of 30.

Research Question 3: What influences might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on AIR parent self-determination scores?

The Black Self-Determination Experience's third research question sought to better understand the Experience's potential influence upon student self-determination scores, as measured by the AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form. Figure 11 presents AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form baseline and intervention means. During baseline, at 82%, parents and the guardian rated their children's self-determination level fairly high. Post the Experience, these same parents and guardian rated their children's self-determination level as 76%. These results indicate a 6% decrease in student self-determination levels, as reported by parents and the guardian.

Figure 11. AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form Baseline and Intervention Means

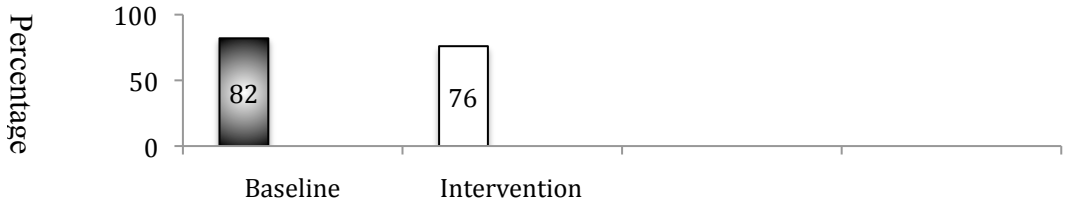


Figure 12. Figure 12 presents individual AIR Self-Determination Parent Form scores. As evidenced in Figure 12, each parent/guardian rated their child's baseline

self-determination level within a range of 69 (77%) to 87 (97%). They rated intervention levels from 67 (74%) to 74 (82%). Parents and the guardian reported a mean score lower than students. Individually, Quest's father believed his self-determination increased by 2 points from 69 (77%) to 71 (79%). Wisdom's father indicated a 6 point decrease in his son's self-determination level from 8 (86%) to 71 (79%). Perspective's father reported a 4point increase from 63 (70%) to 67 (74%). Hatshepsut's auntie reported a 1 point increase from 69 (77%) to 70 (78%). Evolving's mother reported a 13 point decrease from 87 (97%) to 74 (82%).

Figure 12. Individual AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form scores

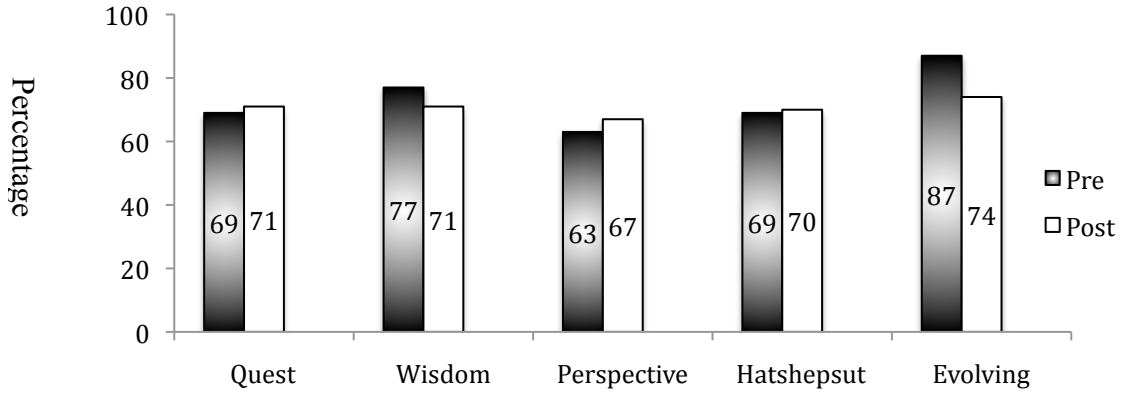
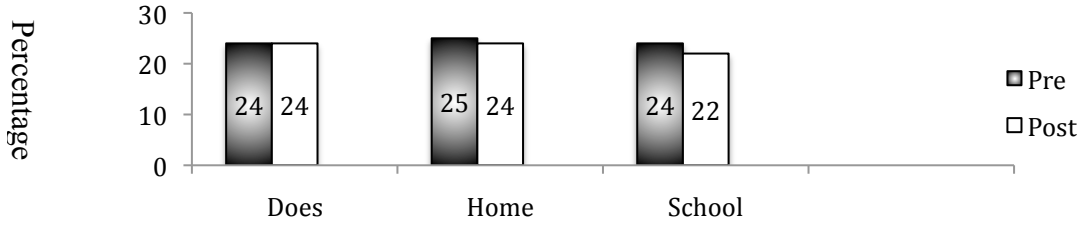


Figure 13. A closer examination of student AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form results provides more details. Figure 13 reflects AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form group means in regards to (a) things my child does, (b) what happens at school (student opportunities to self-determine at school), and (c) what happens at home (student opportunities to self-determine at home). As evidenced in Figure 13, parents indicated no change in their children's' self-determined acts. Parents reported a 1% decrease in their children's self-determined acts at home and a 2% decrease in their self-determined acts at school.

Figure 13. AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form Group Means

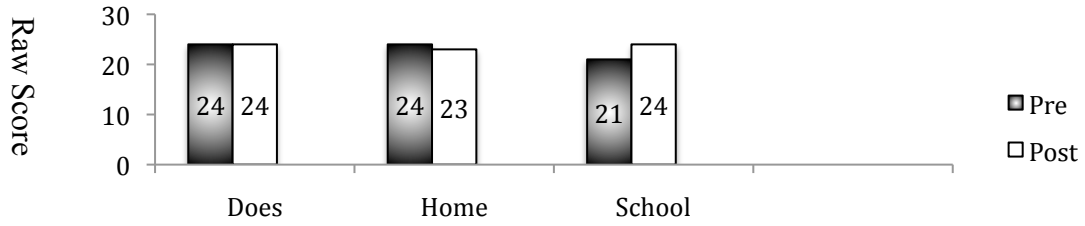


Note. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

For a more thorough examination, I include Figures 14 through 18. These Figures reflect individual student AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form results in relation to a) things my child does, (b) what happens at school (student opportunities to self-determine at school), and (c) what happens at home (student opportunities to self-determine at home). I include these figures to illustrate the Experience's influence upon individual components of each student's AIR self-determination levels.

Figure 14. Figure 14 presents Quest's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form scores. As evidenced in the Figure, his father indicated no change in his self-determined acts. His father indicated a 1 decrease in Quest's self-determined acts at home and a 3 point increase in his son's self-determined acts at school.

Figure 14. Quest's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form Scores

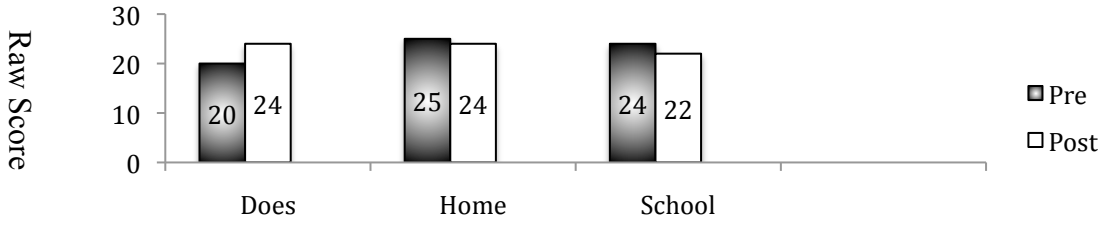


Note. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Figure 15. Figure 15 presents Hatshepsut's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form scores. As evidenced in the Figure, her auntie indicated a 4 point increase

in her self-determined acts. She indicated a 1% decrease in Hatshepsut's self-determined acts at home and a 2 point decrease in her self-determined acts at school.

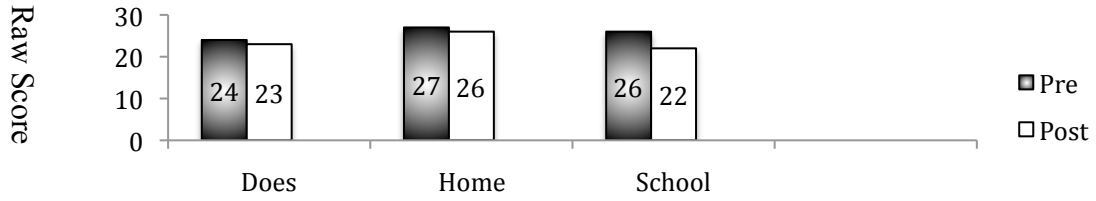
Figure 15. Hatshepsut's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form Scores



Note. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Figure 16. Figure 16 presents Wisdom's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form scores. As evidenced in the Figure, his father indicated a decrease in each of his son's self-determination levels. The father indicated a 1 point decrease in his self-determined acts, a 1 point decrease in his self-determined acts at home, and a 4 point decrease in his self-determined acts at school.

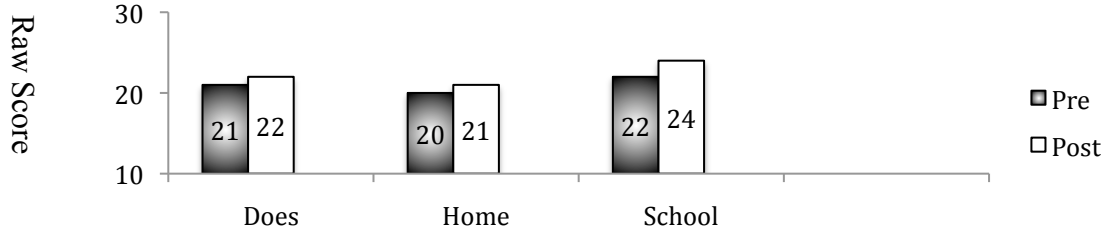
Figure 16. Wisdom's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form Scores



Note. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Figure 17. Figure 17 presents Perspective's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form scores. As evidenced in the Figure, his father indicated an increase in each of his son's self-determination levels. The father indicated a 1 point increase in his self-determined acts. His father indicated a 1 point increase in his self-determined acts at home. He indicated a 2 point increase in his son's self-determined acts at school.

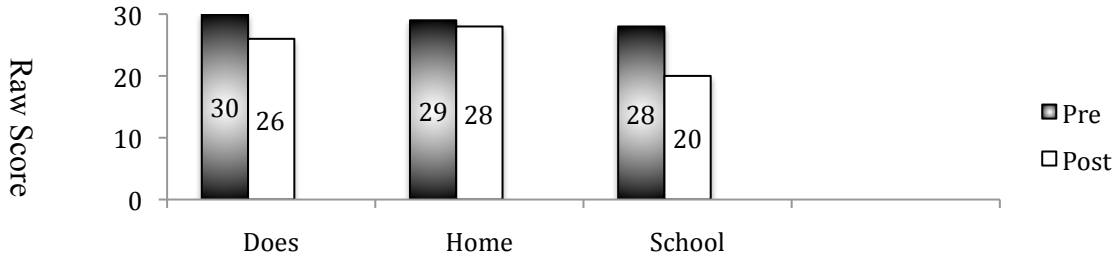
Figure 17. Perspective's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form Scores



Note. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Figure 18. Figure 18 presents Evolving's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form scores. As evidenced in the Figure, his mother indicated a decrease in each of her son's self-determination levels. The mother indicated a 4 point decrease in his self-determined acts. She indicated a 1 point decrease in his self-determined acts at home and an 8 point decrease in his self-determined acts at school.

Figure 18. Evolving's AIR Self-Determination Scale Parent Form Scores



Note. Do, Feel, At School, and At Home bars have a maximum score of 30.

Research Question 4: What influences might the Black Self-Determination Experience have on student academic identities?

The Black Self-Determination Experience's fourth research question sought to better understand the Experience's potential influence upon student academic identities, as measured by the CCAM. Table 13 presents each student's baseline and intervention CCAM academic identity. As evidenced in the table, three students CCAM academic identities changed from baseline and intervention. Quest's baseline CCAM indicated a

Primary Cultural & Raceless identity, while his intervention CAM indicated a Raceless identity. Wisdom's baseline CCAM indicated a Primary Cultural identity and his intervention CCAM indicated a Primary Cultural and Raceless identity. Evolving's baseline CCAM returned a Primary Cultural & Raceless identity, while his intervention CCAM returned a Primary Cultural & Oppositional identity. Hatshepsut and Perspective's baseline and intervention CCAM identities expressed no change. Hatshepsut's CCAMs returned a Raceless identity and both Perspective's CCAMs returned a Primary Cultural & Oppositional academic identity.

Table 13

Individual Baseline and Intervention Academic Identities as Measured by the CCAM

Category	Baseline	Intervention
Quest	Primary Cultural & Raceless	Raceless
Wisdom	Primary Cultural	Primary Cultural & Raceless
Evolving	Primary Cultural & Raceless	Primary Cultural & Oppositional
Hatshepsut *	Raceless	Raceless
Perspective *	Primary Cultural & Oppositional	Primary Cultural & Oppositional

* Indicates no change in academic identity from baseline to intervention

Research questions five through eight each necessitated the use of qualitative methodologies. To present findings, in instances I present a representative sample of student responses, which I believe encapsulate the students' story. I use the term "story" and not "theme" because students made it a point that I share their story. In other instances, I purposefully include as much of the student's voice and story as possible and necessary. While presenting the students' story, I share dissenting student

views to provide a more holistic representation of the students' voice. I believe this method enables me to (a) answer research questions and (b) share the students' story and voice.

Research Question 5: How do students believe their Black Self-Determination Experience influenced their content knowledge scores?

The Black Self-Determination Experience's fifth research question sought to capture and better understand student perceptions abut the Experience's influences upon their content knowledge scores, as measured by Black Self-Determination Experience Content Knowledge pre and post assessments. No one student directly answered the direct inquiry about how they believed their Experience influenced their content knowledge scores. However, a synthesis of student discussions and responses surrounding their *State of Today's Black Student* addresses (one address about Black students without IEPs and one address about Black students with IEPs) suggests that these addresses influenced students to understand themselves as members of America's Black student collective body.

This synthesis also revealed that, through their understanding, they came to regard themselves as a part of America's collective Black student body simply based on the color of their skin. It seems students no longer understood a Black student's educational concerns as separate from their own. It was almost as if the addresses built community, whereas before, it seemed they viewed themselves as individual Black students disjointed from the rest of America's Black students. In a real sense, it seems that students' understanding of today's Black students encouraged them to self-engage in their Black Self-Determination Experience, which then contributed to their increased

content knowledge scores. Experience students' story about how their Experience resulted in their increased content knowledge scores, or learning, resides in self-engagement, which resulted from their understanding of the state of today's Black student and how their skin color connected them to this "student" and "state."

Self-engagement. To present this story, I do not disaggregate student responses in relation to Black students with and without IEPs. Rather, I combine this information because at some point, students ceased differentiating between whether or not a Black student had an IEP. It seemed as if they just considered the student Black. During meetings two and three, students, as a group, delivered State of Today's Black Student addresses in response to facts found during their Experience. Interestingly, during the focus group prior to their addresses, in which they discussed educational facts, they made concerted efforts to distinguish facts pertaining to Black students form other ethnic groups. It seemed as if they sought comparison and separation. When asked to deliver their determinations (addresses), students used terms and/or concepts such as lazy, confused, bad attitude, misinformed, divided and conquered, lacking leadership, ignorant, misguided, lost, fatherless, misinterpreted, gifted, potential, disappointed, misdiagnosed, abused, conflicted, distracted, life, guild, lying to self, wise, loud, violent, searching, scared of begin successful, powerful beyond measure, impoverished, extra help, unsure, tricked, prideful, thoughtless actions, challenge of education, angry, special, and Black. It was then that a student, who did not complete his Experience obligations and was not included in study results, used the word *hopeless*.

The word hopeless seemed to trigger each student, as all students joined in to discuss the word. During this discussion, students focused on the movie *Coach Carter*.

I need to add context for understanding. Coach Carter, based on a true story, concentrated on a Richmond, CA inner city basketball team. In the movie, Coach Ken Carter, in his first year as the team's coach, required players to sign a contract before joining the team. In the contract, players agreed to attend every class and sit in the front row of the class. Carter then asked the school to provide progress reports regarding the educational and attendance activities of all basketball players. The school begrudgingly provided the reports that Carter then reviewed to assure that each player adhered to the contract.

When Carter finally received progress reports, he realized that many players had not adhered to the contract. He responded by placing a chain and padlock on the basketball gymnasium door and a note directing players to the school's library, which many had never entered. In the library, alongside volunteer teachers who would serve at tutors, Carter told the players that he wound not reopen the gymnasium for games or practice until each payer achieved the rules set forth in his signed contract. Initially, players balked, but eventually began working to adhere to their signed contracts. In the between time, Carter cancelled numerous games including the school's game with its greatest rival. The community met Carter's actions with threats and vandalism. The national media met Carter's actions with acclaim. His players met his actions with profanity, disregard, and insubordination. One player, who sold drugs, met Carter's action by removing himself from the team. Later, this player witnesses his drug dealing mentor's murder and responds by running, in blood stained clothing, to Carter's home to tearfully plead for his acceptance back on the team, which Carter provided.

Towards, the end of the movie, parent and teacher groups conspired to have the school board terminate Carter's employment and the chain and padlock removed from the gymnasium door. After learning the school board's decision, Carter returns to the gymnasium to retrieve his belongings. Upon arriving at the gymnasium door, he finds the chain removed. Inside, he finds his basketball team sitting in desks, along side the tutors, at half court of the basketball floor. As Carter stood in what I consider "awe," a player commented, "sir, they can cut the chain off the door, but they can't make us play." Another player, Carter's son then remarked, "we've decided, we're going to finish what you started sir." Lastly, another player remarked, "yeah so leave us be coach, we got shit to do sir!"

I add this context because, at that point Carter turns to leave the gymnasium, the player who witnessed the murder stood and finally answered the inquiry Carter continuously posed to him throughout the movie. The young man finally responded to Carter's challenge of, "young man, what is your greatest fear." I add this context because it seems that Experience students focused on their understanding that a Black student's fear of being successful serves as a primary cause for many of the Black students' educational shortcomings. I add this context because Wisdom summarized this fear when he quoted the young man's response to Carter and said,

> Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine, as children do. It's not

> just in some of us. It's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others (italics added for emphasis).

Now, reviewing Wisdom's remarks, I notice that he did not change words from first to third person. I now understand this as a sign of acceptance of the educational concerns associated with all Black students. I now understand it all the more as I remember, shortly after Wisdom stopped speaking, the students in unison singing lyrics from Coach Carter's title track, *Hope*. They sang,

I wish the way I was living could stop
Serving rocks, knowing the cops is hot when I'm on the block
And I - wish my brother would've made bail
So I won't have to travel six hours to see him in jail
And I - wish that my grandmother wasn't sick
Or that we would just come up on some stacks and hit a lick (I wish)
And I - wish my homies wouldn't have to suffer
When the streets get the upper hand on use and we lose a brother
And I - wish I could go deep in the zone
And lift the spirits of the world with words within this song (I wish)
And I - wish I could teach a soul to fly
Take away the pain out your hands and help you hold 'em high
And I - wish my homie Butch was still alive
And on the day of his death he had never took that ride
And I - wish that God could protect us from the wrongs
So that all the soldiers that was sent overseas come home
And uh - we will never break though they devastate
We shall motivate, and we gotta pray, all we got is faith
Instead of thinking' about who gon' die today
The Lord is gon' help you feel better so you ain't gotta cry today
Sit at the light so long
And then we gotta move straightforward cause we write so strong
So when right go wrong
Just say a lil' prayer, get your money man, life goes on... (Let's go)

(chorus)
Though I'm hopeful, yes I am, hopeful for today
Take this music and use it, let it take you away

And be hopeful, hopeful, and He'll make a way
I know it ain't easy but - that's okay
Cause we hopeful

Students repeated the chorus several times and, afterwards, Perspective commented, about the "basically negative" words they used to describe the Black student. Each student acknowledged the words and agreed with Perspective's position. Interestingly, when discussing the state of today's Black student, students engaged in a discussion about how, without questioning their positions, positively they defined Asian American students. When asked how they viewed Asian Americans students, a student who did not complete Experience obligations commented, "the stereotypical." Yet, when asked about the words they used to define the Black student Wisdom said, "but we do have facts," and later said, "that's the thing! None of the stuff that we just read describes us completely." His comments seem to represent other Experience students' dismissal of their negative positions. However, Wisdom further said we defined America's Black students as "niggers." A great discussion then ensued about if and why or why not America's Black student had become niggers. Perspective and Wisdom dominated the discussion and discussed the process they believed transformed the Black student into a nigger. They resolved that the transformation began with enslavement and traveled to a point, as Perspective said, "we accepted the fact that Black is bad (italics added for emphasis)." Wisdom agreed when he said, "niggers, we accepted that word, niggers (italics added for emphasis)."

The discussion concluded with students defining America's Black student as lost and scared of being successful. This agreement seemed to enable each student to understand him and her self as a member of America's Black student body. I believe it

did because they realized that, if America perceived a Black student as a nigger, than America would perceive them as niggers simply based on the color of their skin. This understanding seemed to encourage, enable, and empower students to self-engage and learn the Experience's central content knowledge, which I designed to increase their self-awareness. Thus it seems that self-awareness prompted their quest to be more self-aware, which self-engagement facilitated.

Another discussion that ensued surrounding students' state of today's Black student addresses revolved around who held the responsibility for many of the concerns pertaining to today's Black student. Students conducted this discussion when they learned the purpose of their Experience and that they were assembled to assist in my efforts to enhance the Black students' self-awareness, self-determination, and educational outcomes. Again Wisdom and Perspective dominated the discussion, which occurred during meeting one's audio recorder malfunction. Yet, regardless of the audio recorder malfunction, in my field notes I noted,

> I believe students believed they experienced an opportunity to learn more about Black history and some of the struggles Blacks have, and continue to experience, while seeking an education. I also believe students believed they had an opportunity to demean Whites, as many of the students seemed to hold Whites responsible for the 'problems.' (Goff, 2009)

In my field notes, I alluded to a spirited discussion in which Wisdom countered Perspective's position that the "White man" held the responsibility for today's Black student. My field note also documented Perspective's constant argument that the White

man situated the Black student amidst barriers that led to the Black students' in-school and postschool transition outcomes. Wisdom countered and said that the Black student was responsible for his or her educational condition. Evolving seemed conflicted by the discussion, yet sided with Wisdom's argument that the Black student was responsible for his educational condition. However, Evolving acknowledged first, that his mother was White and that this fact influenced his position. Quest indicated that he understood how the White man and the Black student both held responsibility for the Black students' educational concerns. Hatshepsut shared her beliefs that the Black student held sole responsibility for his or her educational condition.

At this point, my field note documents my possible impact in regards to the information I shared about the deficit thinking embedded within education's child saving theory and social control model of education. According to my field note, I instructed students that during this meeting and Experience, they would have every opportunity to control their education, yet some had begun by giving control of their condition to the White man. I then discussed this behavior's disempowerment. At that point, Perspective agreed and began to discuss, with Wisdom, the Black students' control. I then inserted that by saying the White man held the responsibility, for the Black students' education outcomes, actually perpetuated many of the concerns I sought to address.

The discussion seemed to frame the students' Experience around empowerment. It also seemed to enable students to understand the power they wielded over their education and destinies. More to the point, the discussion seemed to lead students to understand the Black students' educational concerns as concerns the Black student

could address. In a real sense, I believe the discussion furthered the students' self-awareness and understanding of their power, which I truly believe influenced their increased content knowledge scores. I believe that at that point, the students self-engaged and began believing in self-awareness's abilities to empower today's Black student to address his or her educational concerns. I believe students then began thirsting for the self-awareness embedded in the Experience, which I believe was reflected their increased content knowledge scores reflected. I believe Perspective's diary entry in response to his feelings about the meeting best summarizes the students' self-engagement. In his diary he wrote, "I loved it. I really thought about stuff that I wound normally not think about. [It] made me dig into my brain and put myself in other people's shoes."

Research Question 6: How do students believe their Black Self-Determination Experience influenced their self-determination scores?

During our final meeting, I specifically asked students to address the Experience's potential influence upon their AIR Self-Determination student and parent self-determination levels. To answer this research question, I present each student's response to this inquiry, but first present each student's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student and Parent Form self-determination baseline and intervention scores to provide context. While presenting student responses, I provide background context, which sometimes includes diary entries, secondhand parent-student conversations, and follow-up questions. This I do, for I believe it enables one to better understand the Experience's influence on student self-determination levels.

Quest. Quest opened his Experience with a baseline AIR Student self-determination score of 82%, which during intervention he increased to 86%. His father scored his baseline level as 79%, which he decreased to 69% during intervention. When asked about his student self-determination level, Quest acknowledged that his baseline score resulted from the fact, as he said, "the questions . . . the first time I didn't . . . really break it down." I then asked, "do you believe this one [the intervention score] is more accurate. He replied, "yes." When asked why he believed his scores changed, he replied, "I guess going back through the questions and reading them more carefully." I then asked if believed he was more self-determined, to which he replied, "yes . . . because I have a better understanding about the . . . whole thing." Quest's diary also illuminates his belief about his self-determination level. In it, in response to his father's 10% decrease, Quest wrote, "I would expect that coming from a parent that knows me. My reaction about this is that parents understand you more then what you think they do."

Wisdom. Wisdom opened his Experience with a baseline AIR Student self-determination score of 85%, which during intervention he increased to 86%. His father scored his baseline self-determination level as 86%, which he decreased to 79% during intervention. When asked about his student self-determination level, Wisdom said, "I got the same." When asked why he believed he received the "same" score, he discussed the mathematics used in his calculations, which effectively avoided the inquiry. Also, when earlier asked to discuss his self-determination level he said, "I did earlier." When asked how his self-determination understanding might help him in his future and if he believed it would, he replied, "it's like, pretty much, how can it help you."

Perspective. Perspective's baseline and intervention scores he rated both as 78%. His father rated his baseline self-determination as 70%, which he increased to 74% during intervention. Interestingly, Perspective's AIR Self-Determination Scale Student Form results indicated no change in his self-determination level from baseline to intervention, though his father indicated a 4% increase. It appears his father considered him more self-determined. When asked about how the Experience impacted his self-determination, a most interesting discussion between Perspective, Wisdom, Hatshepsut, and the facilitator ensued. The discussion began when Perspective replied to the prompt by saying:

> Perspective: I now don't think I'm any less than a White man.
>
> Wisdom: You think that you were less than a White male?
>
> Perspective: Yeah, I was raised to think that.
>
> Hatshepsut: Think you less than a White man?
>
> Perspective: I was raised to think that.
>
> Wisdom: Trained?
>
> Facilitator: Trained is a good word.
>
> Perspective: I was not trained. All I saw . . . everything basically says the white man is superior over the black man.

The fact that Perspective's Experience resulted in his no longer feeling inferior to a "White man" demonstrates that he believed his Black Self-Determination Experience increased his feelings of control over his education and destiny. At the least, it illustrates his increased empowerment, which may have been the answer to this

research question that sought to better understand the Experience's potential impacts upon their AIR Self-Determination student and parent levels.

Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut opened her Experience with a baseline AIR Student self-determination score of 81%, which during intervention she increased to 89%. Her auntie scored her baseline self-determination level as 77%, which she increased to 78% during intervention. When asked about her student self-determination level, Hatshepsut said, "I think it kind of informed me a little bit on stuff that I didn't know, I guess. I didn't know all this." In her diary she wrote, "to be real this self determination," which bears noting because this being "real" remains synonymous with being Black and maintaining one's Black community membership.

I next asked Hatshepsut about her auntie's scores, which indicated a 1% increase, to which I replied, "that's interesting" and she replied, "it is." I then asked, "what do you think about that." Hatshepsut replied, "I have no idea. I think I changed." I now need to add context. Hatshepsut did not attend the Experience's initial meeting because she had been involved in a fight the previous day. Her auntie telephoned me and informed me of Hatshepsut's circumstance and that she would not be allowed to participate. After a lengthy discussion, in which the auntie shared her efforts since Hatshepsut's mother's death, she detailed some of the numerous measures she had taken to ensure Hatshepsut's well being and how Hatshepsut rewarded her efforts with disrespect and unacceptable behaviors. She also detailed some of Hatshepsut's behaviors, such as stealing a family member's ring and constant fights and lying. She next shared her serious contemplations about returning Hatshepsut, by bus, to live with

another family member in New Orleans. After our discussion, she agreed to allow Hatshepsut to participate and hoped the Experience would prove beneficial.

Evolving. Evolving opened his Experience with a baseline AIR Student self-determination score of 91%, which during intervention he decreased to 81%. His mother rated his baseline self-determination as 97%, which she decreased to 82% during intervention. Interestingly, both Evolving (10%) and his mother (15%) indicated decreased self-determination, to which he replied, "I have a close relationship with my mom." When asked about his decrease Evolving said, "I just got a better understanding." In his diary he wrote, "the score of myself determination score is very well. I believe in myself and my dreams." He did not address the discrepancy between his score and that of his mothers. He did, however, respond to my follow-up question of, "how might your understanding of self-determination . . . help you in your future? Do you think it will?" He said,

> after learning this lesson, it's not about what other people think. It's about what you want to do in life and, like, how you want to succeed. It's just about you, not about other people, but at the same time, it is kind of about helping your people.

Research Question 7: How do students believe their Black Self-Determination Experience influenced their academic identities?

I specifically asked students to address the Experience's potential influence upon their academic identities. To answer this research question, I asked students to discuss (a) their baseline and intervention academic identity, (b) if they considered their CCAM results to be accurate, and (c) which identity they preferred. I present various

student responses to these inquiries and begin with each student's baseline and intervention academic identity to provide context. While presenting student responses, I rely heavily upon their diary entries because students seemed reluctant to speak aloud about their identities. However, their diaries provide insights into the Experience's potential influence upon their academic identities.

Quest. Quest's baseline and intervention CCAMs both returned that he had a Raceless academic identity. When asked about his Experience's potential influence upon his academic identity, he never did specifically answer the question. He did, however, engage in a most interesting dialogue with a student who did not complete her Experience obligations and was not included in results. I now present this dialogue.

> Quest: It says highly mastered goals.
>
> Facilitator: What do you think about the piece where it says that [raceless] students deny their relationship with the Black community in order to gain upward social mobility?
>
> Quest: I don't think that's towards me, because I don't act two different. I don't act like . . . two different people. Like she said, how she talks White on the phone? I don't. I don't do that. I talk how I talk usually when I'm talking to somebody else, most of the time.
>
> Student: That goes back to him being in Mississippi. You don't sound like them, right? So, they say you sound White? Well, when you come here, you ain't got to change your voice?
>
> Quest: I didn't change my voice when I went down there.

Student: You did say that you tried to talk like them. So you did change your voice?

Quest: I tried to. That doesn't mean I talked like them.

Student: And you couldn't take it so you came back. Why didn't you tell them they sound Mississipian . . . they sound black.

Student: I'm not criticizing. That's what he said.

Quest: Ok…I did say that. That's not why I moved, because of that.

Wisdom. Wisdom's baseline CCAM returned that he had a Primary Cultural academic identity. His intervention CCAM returned the blended Primary Cultural and Raceless academic identity. When asked about the Experience's potential influence upon his identity, he said,

> It mostly fits . . . because [I believe] . . . if we get educated and we do what we need to do, then it will help out the community. That's not my personal goal. I don't care. Y'all need to do what you need to do for yourself. I am going to help them out anyway.

He later said, "just because our identities changed, it don't mean that we have confidence in our identities, no matter what they are." Though Wisdom seemed evasive, his diary provides insights into his beliefs about his Experience's influence upon his identity, which seem to illuminate his enhanced understanding of self-determination's abilities to enable one to control one's education and destiny. In his diary he wrote,

> I was PC at first but I changed to PCR. Through the study I realized that the Black man's failure is his own fault. I prefer the one I got. CCAM is

a generalization of how a person taking it may think, but it cannot group their entire thought process on the subject. The study can change a student's CCAM identity because it gives them extra information that can change how they think.

Wisdom wrote, "the Black man's failure is his own fault," [italics added for emphasis]. I do not interpret this as self-hatred or blame. I interpret this as attributing the responsibility for one's condition to one self, which remains as self-determination tenet. Some might argue that Wisdom, blamed the "victim," which in and of it self victimizes an individual. I would not. I argue that Wisdom's words demonstrated an understanding of self-determination's potential to empower. Though he used the word "fault," I do not discredit his message, which juxtaposes learned helplessness and essentially says, the Black man is in control of his successes and failures.

Perspective. Perspective's baseline and intervention CCAMs presented no change as both returned that he had the blended Primary Cultural & Oppositional academic identity. Typically, Perspective had an abundance to say, especially when discussing another's academic identity. For example, when Quest addressed his self-determination, Perspective engaged in the following discussion:

Perspective: I see the raceless in him, because every time you ask him a question, he tends to give in real quick. Like, if you put a little pressure on him, he tends to give in.

Wisdom: That doesn't mean anything about him being raceless.

Perspective: Yes, it does, because that's something that tells that you would give up your…your, um… No, I'm serious. You know what I'm saying?

When asked how his Experience might have influenced his academic identity, he replied, "because right now . . . not to boast or anything . . . I can say that I have a more common idea on both sides of the world." He later explored this notion to include his understanding of the "White man's" oppressive acts towards Blacks. Perspective remained rather silent when discussing his academic identity, but did write about it in his diary though he admitted, "I never used my diary." In his diary, he wrote, "I learned about myself. Primary cultural is the best for me." Interestingly, every group member agreed that they considered Perspective to be Primary Cultural & Oppositional. When discussing his identity with the facilitator in regards to the identity's definition, they engaged in the following discourse.

> Facilitator: It defines . . . your academic identity . . . [to] . . . adopt accommodation without assimilation. Meaning, you'll fit in, but you not gonna give up who you are.
>
> Perspective: Yeah!
>
> Facilitator: These students hold both mainstream and Black community values. You use your Black community membership as motivation to succeed with the overall goal of bettering the Black community.
>
> Perspective: That's exactly what I do.

Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut's baseline and intervention CCAMs presented no change as both returned that she had a Raceless academic identity. Verbally, she engaged in a dialogue about this identity, which I later explore. Other than that discussion, she did not verbalize much else. In her diary, however, she answered the

inquiry as to how she believed her Experience influenced her academic identity. In her diary she wrote,

> I didn't changes at all. I am who I am. Nobody can't tell meh [me] difference. In order for me to receives my goal, I have to deal with it on my own. I prefer to be raceless because no one can't tell meh [me] difference. I believe the result that I came up with is true because I am who I am. No one can't tell me [me] difference. Racelsess mean's to go against your cultural. Lil Wayne/Michael Jackson/Barack Obama. Raceless, someone who deny their Black community in the attempts to gain upward social mobility.

Evolving. Evolving's baseline CCAM returned that he had the blended Raceless and Primary Cultural academic identity. His intervention CCAM returned the blended Primary Cultural and Oppositional identity. Evolving did not verbalize much to answer the inquiry of his Experience's potential influence upon his academic identity. However, in his diary he wrote,

> Raceless—Tiger Woods, Oppositional—Huey P Newton, Primary Cultural—Bob Marley, P. C. R. —Michael Eric Dyson, [and] P. C. O. —Tupac. It was a great learning material. Its something that I didn't know. This was my fav lesson. I prefer is primary cultural and raceless because Im all for my education and I kinda do it for the Blacks [italics added for emphasis]. I believe its true. It shows the real me.

Evoloving's use of the word "the" before Blacks seems to indicate the Raceless components of his academic identity, for the word seems to designate himself as somehow different or separate from "Blacks."

I now share a discourse students conducted when discussing Hatshepsut's self-determination. I share this dialogue because I believe it adds thick and rich description to how the Experience's potential influence to a student's academic identity. I preface the dialogue by stating my belief that students gained as much from discussing another's identity as they did from discussing their own. The dialogue began as Hatshepsut and I discussed the fact that, despite all her and her auntie had experienced, the auntie indicated that Hatshepsut's self-determination had increased by one percentage point. When asked about this point, Hatshepsut commented, "I think I changed." A most enthralling group dialogue ensued, and rather than discuss the dialogue, I believe it best if one experiences the dialogue for self.

Facilitator: What might have changed about you?

Group: Laughter

Facilitator: Don't . . . she's shy.

Perspective: I know, that's why I'm laughing.

Wisdom: There's something the matter because she acts like she's afraid.

Facilitator: Right.

Perspective: Wait…what?

Facilitator: Maybe that's why she doesn't do things.

Wisdom: Right . . . because you're lazy.

Facilitator: No, I'm not saying she's lazy.

Wisdom: You didn't say it, I did.

Facilitator: Hatshepsut?

Hatshepsut: Why you say that? Why you got to say that?

Perspective: Because, after all the years I known you, I didn't…I didn't…all I knew was you was loud.

Wisdom: Everybody knew you was.

Perspective: You are opposite, but you just put on that mask

Facilitator: The mask

Group: Laughter

Facilitator: (to the group) Just for the record, which Hatshepsut do you find more likely to be around?

Perspective: This one.

Wisdom: This one. When you're loud, I just want to slap you, man!

Evolving: Me, too!

Hatshepsut: Evolving, please.

Evolving: Beating up on people for no reason . . . Loud for no reason . . . Why are you so loud Hatshepsut?

Hatshepsut: Because.

Perspective: She just trying

Facilitator: Let her tell it. Let her tell it.

Group: Laughter

Facilitator: The question is why do you seem to be two different people?

Hatshepsut: No, not with them. They don't want to learn.

Facilitator: Them who?

Hatshepsut: No, I'm not trying to put it on them. You know what I'm saying.

Wisdom: No, I don't.

Facilitator: Bring it.

Hatshepsut: It's like they

Facilitator: They, who is they? You can say it.

Hatshepsut: The crowd I'm with.

Facilitator: What crowd is that?

Hatshepsut: It's like

Perspective: They're niggas, right?

Group: Laughter

Hatshepsut: (mumblings) You don't . . .

Group: Laughter

Hatshepsut: I'm trying to tell them.

Group: Laughter

Hatshepsut: I mean, the people that I be with at times…and they be loud. . .

Facilitator: What people, though?

Hatshepsut: You know, like . . . dang. . . Black people. When I be with them at times. . .

Wisdom: No, no, no. . . don't just say Black people.

Facilitator: Let her say what she wants to say.

Wisdom: Okay.

Hatshepsut: They don't want to be nothing in life, but I do, and so that's why when I'm with them, I'll change. Like, I'll get loud and stuff like that, but when

I'm in . . . well, not trying to say always, but when I'm trying to be something like.

Facilitator: When you're around me, you don't do that.

Hatshepsut: Yeah, because you once was my teacher and I wanted to be something in life and I just went for it. I switched it up. That's like the burden of acting white.

Facilitator: That is exactly the burden of acting white.

Hatshepsut: Yeah. . . that's. . . I could say that I'm one of them.

Facilitator: What have you learned, seriously?

Hatshepsut: Yeah.

Facilitator: Do you really believe you been hiding?

Hatshepsut: Yeah. . . true.

Facilitator: How come?

Hatshepsut: Because, I like, act different in front of the people that I'm with because they don't, like, want nothing I like, but I do. . . but when I get, like, by myself, it's like I've totally changed.

Research Question 8: Why or why not do students believe other Black students should have the Black Self-Determination Experience?

During our final meeting, I specifically asked students, "do you believe . . . the Black Self-Determination Experience is something that other black students should have?" Perspective, Wisdom, and Quest answered the prompt. Perspective said, "Yeah, I think every student, even White people, should know this, too." When asked why, he replied,

> because, if they know we know the answer, they'll be scared . . . I mean, if they know we have the key in our hands . . . it will kind of like shut them down. Like, we'll throw a brick in their path. They're gonna have to find another way to depress us.

Perspective eventually said, "this is bad. It's like the end and I feel bad . . . I really hate waking up in the morning and coming up here, but then when I come up here, I don't want to leave." Wisdom responded to Perspective and said, "Yeah man, me, too! I feel empty." I consider Wisdom's comment as confirmation that he believed other Black students should have the Black Self-Determination Experience. Evolving's response of, "its been a good study." I also understand as confirmation of his belief that other Black students should have the Black Self-Determination Experience.

Though Hatshepsut and Quest did not directly respond to the prompt, their earlier comments indicate that they believed other Black students should have the Black Self-Determination Experience. For example, Hatshepsut said, "I learned a lot," which realized the Experience's ultimate unspoken purpose. In her diary she wrote, "I am happy I stayed. I felt more powerful." Quest, I believed provided the single most telling word answer to the question whether other Black students should have the Black Self-Determination Experience. When discussing his decreased self-determination score and after I asked, "now that you understand . . . self-determination, do you feel more self-determined? Do you believe you're more self-determined?" Quest replied, "yes." I believe this solitary word from this rather quiet and reserved young man, when understood in context, answers the question. His next words I believe answers the

"why" he held this belief. After I asked why he considered himself more self-determined after the Experience, he said, "because I have a better understanding."

In their own words, each student articulated their belief that Black, White, and students from other cultural backgrounds as well, should have the Black Self-Determination Experience. Their reasons for why they held this belief seem to center around their own personal feelings about the learning, self-awareness, and self-determination they believed they gained. It seems they believed as Wisdom articulated, "right now, I feel that it's just me that knows this and I want . . . people to know."

To answer this question another way, I present Perspective and Wisdom's urging to have their Experience shared. Wisdom opened this discussion by saying, "how are we going to put this out there?" I told him that "we're going to take our results, we're going to write them up, and we're going to publish it." Perspective then, in what turned out to be the final Experience audio recorded comments said, "you know what! You know what we should have done…we should have made it into a little documentary movie. Yeah, have cameras around and then make a movie."

CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

I developed The Black Self-Determination Experience in response to my concerns and frustrations with the lack of research investigating the social and intellectual history undergirding the Black students' special education overrepresentation, as Pulliam (1987) encouraged researchers to do. My concerns and frustrations manifested from my understanding of the disempowerment I believe resides at the phenomenon's core and its all too often omission from the overrepresentation discourse. I needed to develop The Black Self-Determination Experience because, for far too long, I consumed myself with research's preoccupation with the overrepresentation discourse, which seemed directed towards illuminating anything believed to perpetuate overrepresentation, but provided no viable solutions. I needed to develop The Black Self-Determination Experience, for I believed empowering the Black student to achieve, in spite of, answers the quandary surrounding their special education overrepresentation and so much more. I needed to develop The Black Self-Determination Experience because I considered the Black students' special education overrepresentation as a mere a symptom of a disease and that disease being American education's systematic Black student suppression and oppression founded upon its slave society's misperception that the Black student was inherently and intellectually inferior. I needed to develop The Black Self-Determination Experience, for I considered it a component of a social movement to empower the Black student.

Specifically, I developed The Black Self-Determination Experience to empower a Black student to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their education

and destiny. When reviewing my research questions and findings, it may appear that I failed to empower Quest, Wisdom, Perspective, Hatshepsut, or Evolving to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their educations and destinies. Though their scores indicated that they learned the curriculum, their AIR scores appear to indicate little to no increased self-determination or empowerment. However, an in-depth observation of each student I believe illuminates conditions suggesting that I did indeed achieve my overall vision of better understanding how to empower a Black student.

Quest. On the surface, it appears that The Black Self-Determination Experience did not significantly empower Quest to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over his education and destiny. His intervention AIR student scores indicated a four point increase in his self-determination levels, while his AIR parent scores indicated a two point increase. However, when reviewing individual components of his AIR student scores, I believe I achieved my purpose, for it appears that after his Black Self-Determination Experience, Quest believed he experienced more opportunities to self-determine. After his Black Self-Determination Experience, Quest also indicated that he believed he possessed increased self-determination capacities.

I find Quest's self-evaluation extremely influential and worthy, for I believe his awareness of increased opportunities to self-determine and his increased abilities to capitalize on these opportunities reflects his increased self-determination and empowerment. I also believe his father believed as I, for he evaluated Quest's self-determination to increase, particularly at school, post his Black Self-Determination Experience. Most important, though his AIR scores did not reflect it, Quest said he felt more self-determined after his Black Self-Determination Experience. I consider Quest's

Black Self-Determination Experience as one that empowered him to perceive more opportunities to self-determine and equipped him with the skills necessary to self-determine. This if find as a triumph because as he finds opportunities valuable and doable, he is more likely to self-engage and produce meaningful learning, which seems to address one of Quest's major needs.

Wisdom. When reviewing Wisdom's AIR scores, it appears that his Black Self-Determination Experience did not significantly empower him. However, his self-evaluations indicated increased capacities to self-determine and his increased self-determined acts. Interestingly, Wisdom entered his Black Self-Determination Experience amidst parental and educator concerns about his educational behaviors. Yet, post his Black Self-Determination Experience, he indicated increased capacities to self-determine, increased self-determined acts, and increased self-determined acts at school. His parent echoed Wisdom's increased self-determination when he evaluated Wisdom to have increased his self-determined acts at school. Thus, I consider Wisdom's Black Self-Determination Experience influential and worthy because it appears his Experience addressed his education, which seemed to be his most urgent need.

Perspective. Perspective's Black Self-Determination Experience AIR student scores indicated no increased self-determination, and apparently no increased empowerment even though his parent indicated his increased self-determination. However, to make this assertion would be extremely false. Perspective, self-reportedly entered his Experience believing he was inferior to the "White man." Post his Experience, he said he no longer felt this inferiority, which in and of itself makes his Experience a benefit. Most interestingly, for I believe it provides the Experience's

components that led to his empowerment, Perspective remained the most vocal focus group member. Remember, it was Perspective who first suggested to the group that they defined the Black student as a nigger.

It seems that early in his Experience, the Oppositional component of his Primary Cultural and Oppositional academic identity constantly challenged group members to understand White's responsibility for their circumstance. I believe it was not until he learned Franklin's (1984) self-determination definition that he revisited his position, though his identity never changed. Still, it seemed that once we discussed self-determination as control over one's destiny and learned helplessness and giving one's control to an external source, his discourse changed. He no longer argued for the White man's responsibility for his condition. To the contrary, he argued for his control over his condition and even aggravated other group members by using the word nigger as a derogatory term connoting individuals who disempowered themselves by attributing the responsibility for their condition to an external source. Thus, I consider Perspective's Black Self-Determination Experience influential and worthy because it appears that his Experience addressed his feelings of inferiority, which seemed to be his most urgent need.

Hatshepsut. When reviewing Hatshepsut's AIR scores, it appears that she benefited most from her Black Self-Determination Experience. Though she indicated gains in her opportunities to self-determine, her self-determined acts, and self-determined acts at school, it appears that she made the most gains in her beliefs about her capacities to self-determine. Even her aunt considered Hatshepsut to demonstrate

more self-determined acts, which is significant considering the aunt's concerns and frustrations with an untrustworthy Hatshepsut.

Hatshepsut's increased self-determination remains significant because she admittedly struggled with the burden of acting White and, as we learned, the burden of acting White might be a student's attempt to control their education and destiny. Though in her case, it appeared that Hatshepsut had so succumbed to the burden of acting White that she had lost control of her education, destiny, and identity. Hatshepsut's indicated increased capacities to self-determine and increased self-determined acts might suggest that she began to assume, demonstrate, and experience control for her education, destiny, and identity, or as she wrote in her diary, "to be real."

In hindsight, it seems that her intimate discussion, in response to her raceless academic identity that did not change from baseline to intervention, about her burden of acting White had a great influence upon her empowerment. It seems that she used the intimation to express her acquired knowledge and understanding of self. Here again, this exists as a major finding for once again the Black Self-Determination Experience apparently empowered Hatshepsut to address her area of most need, which she articulated as her burden of acting White. I consider Hatshepsut's Experience as influential and worthy because it appears her Experience addressed her burden of acting White and survival conflict, which seemed to be her greatest need.

Evolving. When reviewing Evolving's Black Self-Determination Experience, it becomes glaringly apparent that he began with the highest self-determination scores and concluded with only one student having student scores lower than his. In fact,

Evolving and his parent decreased their scores on each category. However, I find more interesting the fact that Evolving entered his Experience as the only biracial student. I also find interesting that, until the end of his Experience, he seemed to champion arguments for Blacks being responsible for their outcomes.

Towards the end of his Experience, his Primary Cultural & Raceless academic identity changed to a Primary Cultural & Oppositional academic identity. In his diary, he wrote that he preferred his Primary Cultural & Raceless academic identity. When reviewing Evolving's Experience, I am captivated by the curiosity to wonder how his biracial status influenced his academic identity change. I am also most intrigued by his decreased self-determination levels, though he said he just "just got a better understanding." I am intrigued because I wonder if his AIR scores reflected the oppositional components of his intervention identity. Might Evolving's decreased self-determination have resulted from an identity change between? Might his decreased self-determination have resulted from oppositional components within his identity, or might he just have acquired enhanced self-awareness for he did behave consistent with an Oppositional identity?

In all, I find that The Black Self-Determination Experience realized my overall vision to better understand ways to empower Black students to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their education and destinies. I believe it did so by teaching me that it holds the potential to maximize student self-engagement. Not only did I learn of its student self-engagement, I also learned that it holds the potential to individually engage a student that the student might meet a specific need. Interestingly, I learned of The Black Self-Determination Experience's abilities to enhance student self-awareness,

for each student seemed to benefit most from their Experience's abilities to address their knowledge of self, which I and the students believe will prove most beneficial in addressing their educations as well.

The Black Self-Determination Experience's Contributions to Special Education

Through conducting The Black Self-Determination Experience, I realized seven overarching themes that I believe contribute to the Special Education field. First, culturally responsive educational techniques seem to encourage students to self-engage and quest for self-awareness. Second, Experience students maintained misperceptions of the Black student similar to those maintained and advanced by American society. Third, though each student exited their Experience indicating that they felt more self-determined, the AIR scales did not reflect this increase. Fourth, during the Experience, each student learned. Sixth, a student acknowledged experiencing the burden of acting White. Seventh, students sought a new scriptwriter who speaks their language. I now describe each theme.

Culturally responsive education, self-engagement, and self-awareness. Culturally responsive educational practices emphasize providing students access to educational materials encompassing their culture, language, history, and experience. The Black Self-Determination Experience I founded upon culturally responsive educational practices. Initially during their Experience, student seemed to find these culturally responsive practices "new" and appeared reluctant to engage in an educational experience that included their experience. however, I believe once student acclimated to the Experience they actually used it as the motivation that influenced each to self-engage. For example, when students delivered their State of Today's Black

Student and State of Today's Black Student with an IEP addresses, they seemed to see themselves in the reference materials and addresses. In seeing themselves, as acknowledged by multiple students, they apparently found the motivation to self-engage and maximize their learning. In seeing themselves and self-engaging, it seemed that students quested to learn more about themselves. In other words, the Black Self-Determination Experience's culturally responsive educational techniques seemed to influence students to self-engage, which motivated their self-awareness enhancements.

When designing and implementing The Black Self-Determination Experience, I maintained the purpose to enhance student self-awareness. I needed to enhance self-awareness to combat the misperceptions I believed undergirded many of a Black student's educational and societal concerns. Now, it seems that the best component The Black Self-Determination Experience possessed resided in its abilities to motivate students to self-engage. Once self-engaged, it seems students hungered to enhance their self-awareness, which I consider critical. Though without self-awareness, there can still be self-determination, yet, without an authentic sense of self, there can not be the self-determination that research and I believe best to empower the Black student to address their special education overrepresentation and other educational and societal concerns.

As a result of designing, implementing, and being a Black Self-Determination Experience member, I now have a renewed affection for culturally responsive educational practices and self-engagement's abilities to maximize learning. I hold this renewed affection for I believe that culturally responsive educational practices enabled and empowered students to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their Black Self-Determination Experience. I hold this newfound affection for Black students

assuming, demonstrating, and experiencing control over their Black Self-Determination Experience because I believe this experience just might enable them to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over other areas of their lives. I hold this newfound affection, for having students assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their Experience, realizes a Black Self-Determination Experience goal.

The state of today's Black student with and without an IEP. In developing The Black Self-Determination Experience, honestly I thought it clever to harness the 2008's United States Presidential Election's energy and have students deliver presidential-style state of the union addresses. I did not foresee students' *State of Today's Black Student* and *State of Today's Black Student with an IEP* addresses illuminating stereotypes and misperceptions. To hear words such as lost, special, misguided, scared, and hopeless sent my soul into despair, for I truly began to understand misperception's magnitude. I also began to understand the relevance of my belief that too many Black students had internalized these misperceptions and transformed them into the beliefs and false sense of self that might install and perpetuate a self-fulfilling prophecy of Black intellectual inferiority and its accompanying burden of acting White. To hear words such as tricked, misguided, and divided and conquered left me understanding the Black student's need for an authentic sense of self to replace the self-awareness resulting from centuries old misperceptions.

Hearing the students' *State of Today's Black Student* addresses might, to some, validate misperceptions and prove that misperception has become reality. For my purposes, this deficit thinking has no place in a Black Self-Determination Experience, for it precludes one from hearing, feeling, and understanding the students' voice. I did

not hear, feel, nor understand students acknowledging that misperception had become reality. I did not hear, feel, nor understand students acknowledging that they considered the Black student to be inherently nor intellectually inferior. I experienced the students' voice say this is how the world sees us and the world has facts to support this position. I experienced the students' voice fearfully, aggressively, sorrowfully, and sincerely say that this is the dominant voice we hear in regards to our identity and we do not like it. I experienced the students' voice say, it is time for a new voice supported by new facts.

As a result of designing, implementing, and being a Black Self-Determination Experience member, I have a newfound appreciation for the student's voice and recruiting and including this voice. I hold this newfound appreciation for I believe these addresses enabled and empowered students to accept responsibility for their circumstance, which it appears they considered, purely based on their shared skin color, to be synonymous with all of America's Black students. I hold this newfound appreciation for in accepting responsibility for their circumstance, these students first had to become aware of self and self in relation to the reality in which they exist. I hold this newfound appreciation for these students' apparent enhanced self-awareness contributed to their acceptance of responsibility for their condition, which juxtaposes the learned helplessness that overwhelms the Black students' American educational and societal story. This acceptance of responsibility also situates these students to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their lives. I hold this newfound affection for, having students assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their Experience realized a Black Self-Determination Experience goal.

The AIR versus Black self-determination. Each student exited their Black Self-Determination Experience acknowledging that they felt more self-determined. However, no student's AIR scale reflected his or her increased feelings of self-determination. In fact, group means indicated a 3% decrease in their feelings about their self-determination and individual scores indicated that three students decreased in their feelings and the remaining two showed no change. More so, only three students' AIR self-determination scores expressed increased self-determination and these increases only equated to a 1% group mean increase and a 6% decrease in their parents' group mean rating.

It appears that as student's Black self-determination increased, their AIR Self-Determination Student scores barely increased, decreased, or presented no change. Though, Hatshepsut's self-determination scores showed an 8% increase, which remains consistent with research regarding the AIR's gender bias (Nidal elKazimi, personal communication, April 2, 2010). The fact that the AIR did not reflect the students verbalized increased feelings of being more self-determined, introduces a new question and "any experiment worth its salt will raise more questions than it answers" (Sidman, 1960, p. 8). The question resides in whether the AIR is the best scale to capture and reflect a Black student's self-determination. Future research needs to address this inquiry and act in accordance with their findings.

Learning. At the heart of the Black students' special education overrepresentation story resides learning, though it seems to be silent in most overrepresentation discourses. After reviewing the Black Self-Determination Experience, I feel confident in asserting that it exists as a developmental learning

process. During the Experience, students learned the content central to their Experience and, in the process learned about self. Thereby, I believe the Black Self-Determination Experience holds promise to enable and empower Black students to address their special education overrepresentation because it teaches them to learn, and after all the Black student's special education story is truly about learning.

The burden of acting White. During the Experience, Hatshepsut acknowledged experiencing the burden of acting White. She even detailed the lengths to which she went to change her identity when amongst certain groups of students and how these changes resulted in her behavior. Her revelation spawned a wonderful discussion about the burden of acting White's reality and contradicts the volumes of research arguing against the burden of acting White's existence.

A new scriptwriter. One day, while students discussed their Black Self-Determination Experiences, Wisdom said, "there are no more intelligent Black people with me at school next year. Where I can have, like, conversations?" From that discussion, I gather that many Black students, as Wisdom apparently did, hunger for new scriptwriters to engage in a discourse more suited to their experience. From his words, I hold the position that many Black students require a scriptwriter who does not sugarcoat his or her message. The idea of a "new scriptwriter" I gather from Patton's (1998) writings in response to his position as how best to realize Dunn's (1968) special education "revolution."

Dunn (1968), one of the first to address overrepresentation, believed that only a "revolution in special education" could address the Black students' special education overrepresentation. I believe Patton (1998) best articulated how to generate Dunn's

"revolution," when he presented his belief that "the underrepresentation of African Americans and conscious others in the special education knowledge production process" (p. 29) contributed to the overrepresentation phenomenon. He advocated for "new scriptwriters" with inside knowledge and experiences to become leaders in the overrepresentation discourse. He also advocated that these new scriptwriters guide theory, research design, data collection, and interpretation, for he believed these new scriptwriters would provide the critique, caring, and justice necessary to develop new paradigms for understanding overrepresentation and add liberation and emancipation. He used the word "hope" to refer to the new scriptwriters' abilities to end the cycle of domination he believed founded and perpetuates today's Black student special education overrepresentation. From Wisdom's words, it seems the Black student hungers for a scriptwriter, like me, who would include the following section in a dissertation.

My Voice. I employ my voice because the Black students' insider and outsider, double-mindedness, double-consciousness, identity conflict, or survival conflict requires a new scriptwriter. The overrepresentation discourse needs a scriptwriter who does not write about, or even to, the Black student. The overrepresentation discourse needs one who's shared experiences enables her or him to be a Black student. In essence, the overrepresentation discourse needs a Black student speaking as a Black student and, speaking as a Black student, I believe it is time that the overrepresentation discourse heard, as Huckleberry Finn said, "you don't know about me" (Twain, 1958, p. 3).

In completing the overrepresentation section of this manuscript, I addressed calculations used to understand and define the Black students' special education

overrepresentation. I addressed postschool transition outcomes and their potential impacts on a Black special education student's quality of life. I addressed postschool outcomes' possible contributions to the Black students' repetitive special education placement and overrepresentation cycle. I addressed the most articulated overrepresentation perpetuators to segue to proposed solutions, and demonstrated that these systems and educator oriented initiatives present no solutions and might actually disempower a Black student and, in the process, perpetuate overrepresentation. I did all that to provide an overview of the Back students' special education overrepresentation, yet those were not all of my intentions. I addressed the Black students' special education overrepresentation as I did to demonstrate my command of the literature and my ability to articulately and understandingly engage in the overrepresentation discourse. Essentially, I composed the overrepresentation section as a demonstration, with the academy as my audience. As a result, I used my academic voice and now must acknowledge that, for decades, the academic voice has been the primary voice used to address the Black students' special education overrepresentation and this voice has produced no significant decrease in the rates special education indentifies, refers, and overrepresents Black students.

The academic voice's limited abilities to address the Black students' special education overrepresentation presents two crucial quagmires. First, might the academic voice have become a conduit between "experts" discussing the Black students' special education overrepresentation, while treating the Black student as an object to be saved and not a part of the solution? Second, might the academic voice's exclusion of the Black student perpetuate overrepresentation? Shortly after arriving in the academy, I

contemplated and researched these question. My questioning and research led me to understand the academic voice's limitations and my responsibility to forgo my academic voice in lieu of my authentic voice, which I use to realize a purpose.

I use my voice to provide a voice to the voiceless masses of Black students presently and who have ever been a statistic in the overrepresentation discourse. Though the academy readily accepts the academic voice, historically the academic voice has excluded the Black student and this resulting silence perpetuates overrepresentation and disempowerment (Freire, 1970). The Black students' special education overrepresentation and the Black students' disempowerment counter my purpose to empower. Through my voice, I commune with the Black student and voice their condition because silencing the Black student silences myself and perpetuates my very own disempowerment. I use my voice as a source of empowerment and follow Samuel Langhorne Clemens' lead.

Clemens wrote both *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (2007) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1958) under the alias "Mark Twain," which connotes double-minded. Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, the two books' major characters, epitomize Clemens' double -mindedness. Tom Sawyer, the insider, personified the life of the socialite Clemens' celebrity demanded. Huckleberry Finn, the outsider, personified the disconnect Clemens' yearned to experience, especially after Twain found acclaim. Clemens became Mark Twain and employed both Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn to share his double-mindedness, which he revealed as Tom Sawyer's innocence reveling in society's acclaim and to Huckleberry Finn's retreat into solitude to be alone with his lost innocence and disregard for worldly ways. More importantly, as

both Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, Clemens reached both insiders and outsiders, which remains extremely significant to the Black student who has historically existed as both an insider and outsider within American society.

DuBois (1989) wrote eloquently about the Black students' insider/outsider status. DuBois labeled this status a "double-consciousness." The double-consciousness existence includes an individual's awareness of self and awareness of self as perceived by another and maintains the ever-present risk of becoming that which another perceives. For many, this risk becomes an identity conflict. Many Black students experience Twain's double-mindedness or DuBois' double-consciousness and, as a result, constantly exist amidst an identity conflict. Bonner (2000) labeled this phenomenon a "survival conflict" and described it as a struggle to determine and maintain one's identity. Fanon (1963) suggested that the Black students' double-mindedness, double-consciousness, identity conflict, or survival conflict birthed from a choice between begin a slave or being free.

Clemens lived the double-consciousness existence and experienced its ever-present identity conflict, as can be witnessed throughout his writings (Twain, 1889, 1906, 1985). Some consider Clemens' life complex and contradictory (Metzer, 1960). I concur and my concurrence leads to my understanding of the similarities shared between Clemens and the Black student. These shared commonalities situate Clemens' life and literary career as a map that, if followed, might enable me to empower while voicing the concerns of voiceless Black students. Clemens' existence as both Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn enabled him to produce literature readily identifiable and accepted by both insiders and outsiders, which becomes extremely critical to the Black student

because it facilitates their inclusion and empowerment through seeing and hearing their stories and voices.

I use my voice to meet my goal of providing a voice to any Black student who has ever been overrepresented in a special education program. I do so as did Clemens whose ability to voice the experiences of both insiders and outsiders equipped his literature with a universal appeal. The ability to speak as both the insider and outsider enabled Clemens to include both insiders and outsiders, which I find to be extremely significant, necessary, and empowering to the Black student. I find my voice's ability to include the Black student to be significant, necessary, and empowering because for far too long the overrepresentation discourse has excluded the Black student and to exclude the Black student is to add to their disempowerment and feelings of learned helplessness (Diener & Dweck, 1978; Freire, 1970). I also find my voice's ability to include the Black student significant, necessary, and empowering because my voice enables me to address issues the academic voice does not.

Composing this section, I adhered to Pulliam's (1987) teachings. To truly understand today's education, Pulliam advocated that we understand it as social and intellectual history. To understand the Black students' special education overrepresentation story as social and intellectual history dictates two things. First, I must understand the Black student's history, which includes historic firsts, enslavement, misperceptions of inherent and intellectual inferiority, the denial of formal education, and the behaviors associated with these conditions. Second, I must understand the Black students' special education overrepresentation as a symptom of a disease and acknowledge that, until we understand the underlying history supporting

overrepresentation, we serve as medics seeking to cure symptoms while the disease progresses uninhibited. Thus, I use my voice to disseminate an understanding of the Black students' special education overrepresentation story as American social and intellectual history, which I understand to be the product of a system of control maintained through denied access.

The overrepresentation discourse appears disinclined to understand the Black students' special education experience as social and intellectual history and discuss control's influence. The discourse seems reluctant to understand overrepresentation as a remnant of the Black students' American socialization and unwilling to understand that the Black students' special education overrepresentation may result from historic misperceptions of the Black student as inherently and intellectually inferior chattel. The discourse also seems uneasy discussing the history that systematically provided the Black student with unequal opportunities, specifically educational opportunities. The discourse seems unable to understand that the Black students' special education overrepresentation may stand as a testimony to the Black students' American history.

I employ my voice to address these topics, for I believe these topics endure as a backdrop in the overrepresentation discourse. I use my voice to address socialization and control's impacts on the disproportionate rates the American educational system identifies, refers, and overrepresents Black students. To do so, I address hegemony, or "the maintenance of the domination not by sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, *the school*, the mass media, the political system, and the family" [emphasis added] (McLaren, 1989, p. 173). I use my voice to address hegemony

in response to Klingender et al.'s (2005) consideration that hegemony was "an understudied notion in the special education field . .. [and there exists] an urgent need for research on . . . hegemony as it affects . . . disproportionate representation" (p. 6). I use my voice to advance that what we understand as the Black students' special education overrepresentation might be a tale of misperception becoming reality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, The Black Self-Determination Experience realized its purpose to better understand the Experience's influences upon (a) student learning of central Black Experience knowledge content knowledge, (b) enhanced self-determination, (c) academic identity, and (d) contributes to America's general and special education fields as it addressed the Black students' disempowerment and empowerment. Overall, The Black Self-Determination Experience realized its vision to enable and empower participating students to assume, demonstrate, and experience control over their education and destiny.

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